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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE

TORONTO's status as a tidy, well-oiled, ethnically vibrant city is well known. Less renowned but no less admirable is the city's cultural spirit, which might be called, in homage to the resident high priest of irreality, the Cronenberg syndrome. Even the area's theatre scene has recently been in the syndrome's grip. This summer, for example, while New York has been starved for unusual new shows, Toronto has feasted on them. It's had first look at the revised London-bound musical "Kiss of the Spider Woman," an evening based on the Manuel Puig novel about the prison tortures endured by a Marxist (here played by Anthony Crivello) and a gay fantasist (Brent Carver). This version allows audiences a chance to determine whether Chita Rivera, the titular arachnid, can still dance; whether Harold Prince, once again a big-budget director, can still dazzle; and whether Merle Louise, a star of the Merman "Gypsy," can still breathe.

Toronto has also become the world capital of Andrew Lloyd Webberdom. "Evita," the buckets-of-blood musical that "Kiss" in spirit resembles, recently breezed back into town; "Phantom" continues its already long run; and "The Music of Andrew Lloyd Webber," a Michael Crawford-headlined concert, fills up the O'Keefe Centre here (and is due September 22 at Radio City). But no preparation, not even the stiffest Scotch at the city's Algonquin-like Park Plaza Roof Lounge, is sufficiently bracing for what goes on at the Elgin every night: Donny Osmond getting dragged through the desert in "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat." The singer, whom the playbill describes as "a leading figure in the entertainment industry for the last twenty-five years," doesn't exactly *act* the part of Joseph; he romps through it. He's been allowed to do so by a wise English director, Steven Pimlott, whose production consistently shines—almost as much as the heavy sweat on its thirty-three-year-old star's back. You'd sweat a lot, too, if you had to spend two hours every day twitching aerobically under hot gels, clad most often in a towel-girt loincloth—a getup that proclaims the singer's readiness, should the "Joseph" tour ever end, to launch a new career as a professional ecdysiast. When the finale hoists him to the heavens, coat-wings and dark tresses fluttering majestically, Donny looks as if he's auditioning for the high-flying-diva role in David Cronenberg's next movie: "M. Butterfly."

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OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for schedule and ticket information.)

ANNA KARENINA—A musical by Peter Kellogg (book and lyrics) and Daniel Levine (score), which is based on Tolstoy's novel. Ann Crumb, Melissa Errico, Gregg Edelman, Scott Wentworth, John Cunningham, and Jerry Lanning lead the cast. Preview on Aug. 25. Opens Aug. 26 at 6:45. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

DISTANT FIRES—A play by Kevin Heelan, which was seen last season at the Atlantic Theatre. Previews through Aug. 26. Opens Aug. 27 at 8. (Circle in the Square Downtown, 159 Bleecker St. 254-6330.)

OPENED RECENTLY

THE BEST OF FORBIDDEN BROADWAY—This tenth-anniversary edition of Gerard Alessandrini's long-running, ever-fluctuating musical revue is, as one might expect, a treat. There is some new material, but our favorite sequences are still the spoof of "M. Butterfly" and the "Speed-the-Plow" number, "Madonna's Brain," in which David Mamet and Ron Silver try to teach Madonna to act and she ends up tearing off most of her clothes. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/4/92.) (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.)

Todd Weeks and David Wolos-Fonteno in "Distant Fires"

CATSKILLS ON BROADWAY—A festival of ethnicity and all but unbroken laughter. Freddie Roman and Mal Z. Lawrence are the Jewish comedians; Dick Capri handles the Italians; and Louise DuArt does impressions. The jokes explode around us, and there isn't a dud in the lot. (12/23/91) (Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS—Shakespeare in the Park continues with this production, which was staged by Cacá Rosset. (Delacorte, Central Park near W. 81st St. Closes Aug. 30. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 861-7277.)

CONVERSATIONS WITH MY FATHER—If you're looking for a totally satisfying theatrical experience, try the new Herb Gardner, a bittersweet memory play about a Lower East Side barkeep, his two sons, and the patrons of his tavern. As staged by Daniel Sullivan, with an ace cast led by the wonderful Judd Hirsch, the play does what "Jake's Women" and "Dancing at Lughnasa" would probably do if their authors were, respectively, more sophisticated and less sentimental. Grab this one. (4/13/92) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

CRAZY FOR YOU—Loosely based on "Girl Crazy," which opened in 1930, this glorious show is actually a celebration of the music of George Gershwin and the lyrics of his brother Ira—nineteen songs in all—and also of the witty, imaginative choreography of Susan Stroman. Ken Ludwig wrote the lively book. Harry Groener and Jodi Benson are the lead actor/dancers. The scenery is by Robin Wagner; the costumes are by William Ivey Long; and the masterly direction is by Mike Ockrent. Bless 'em all. (3/2/92) (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

FALSETTOS—This back-to-back revival of "March of the Falsettos" and "Falsettoland," two of William Finn's three one-act musicals about a childish, self-absorbed man who leaves his wife and son for his not very nice male lover, is strictly for those who care. We've never understood the appeal of Mr. Finn's trilogy. It has a chronology as complicated as the Oedipus cycle and a dramatic sensibility akin to that of the Oresteia. To us, though, it has always seemed like banality set to music: shallow, unlikable people expressing themselves in shallow, unlikable songs. (5/11/92) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

FIVE GUYS NAMED MOE—The guys are black dancers and singers of ability and spirit, who perform the songs (either lyrics or music or both) of the late Louis Jordan, among them "Don't Let the Sun Catch You Crying," "Ain't Nobody Here but Us Chickens," and "Is You Is or Is You Ain't My Baby?" This London import makes a merry evening. (4/20/92) (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

GUYS AND DOLLS—A lively production of Frank Loesser's perfect musical, under the direction of Jerry Zaks. Nathan Lane and Faith Prince are the leading guy and doll, and Tony Walton designed the stunning scenery. (4/27/92) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

JAKE'S WOMEN—Alan Alda is at his genial best in the new Neil Simon. The play, about an aging writer trying to come to terms with the women in his life, past and present, is pretty much what you'd expect: some funny lines and a lot of phony dialogue. It's predictable, banal, and contrived, but at least it showcases a fine cast of actresses that includes Kate Burton and Joyce Van Patten. (4/6/92) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

JELLY'S LAST JAM—The music of Jelly Roll Morton, self-proclaimed inventor of jazz, and, at the same time, an unsparing delineation of Morton himself. The show, an original if ever there was one, was written and directed by George C. Wolfe. In the starring role, Gregory Hines combines his astonishing talents as tap dancer and actor; Savion Glover, who plays the character as a young man, is worthy of him, which is saying a lot. Also present are Keith David, Tonya Pinkins, Wayne Mathis, and Mary Bond Davis. Luther Henderson has adapted Morton's music and offered some music of his own; the lyrics were written by Susan Birkenhead; and Hope Clark was the choreographer. (5/11/92) (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

LOTTO (EXPERIENCE THE DREAM)—A comedy by Cliff Roquemore. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 505-9251.)

MARVIN'S ROOM—A play about dying, suffering, and sacrifice in one family, written in a style so frisky as to set the teeth permanently on edge. There is a fine performance by Mark Rosenthal as a smoldering adolescent. Also with Alice Drummond, Laura Esterman, and Tim Monsion. Scott McPherson is the dramatist. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000. Closes Sept. 6.)

THE MOST HAPPY FELLA—This is one musical we think the world could be without and feel no sorrow. The story of a girl forced to content herself with some old duffer because some other old duffer wanted to teach everyone a lesson about making do with what life has to offer, it's pseudo opera superimposed on pseudo Americana. As for Gerald Gutierrez's Goodspeed Opera production, it's your basic slightly-better-than-average dinner-theatre revival. What's the rumpus? (2/24/92) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Closes Aug. 30.)

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THE THEATRE–Cont'd

The Night Larry Kramer Kissed Me—A play written and performed by David Drake. (Perry Street Theatre, 31 Perry St. 564-8038.)

The Real Inspector Hound and **The Fifteen Minute Hamlet**—The Roundabout presents a double bill of comedies by Tom Stoppard. Simon Jones and David Healy star in both. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Criterion Center, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

Ruthless!—This camp musical about a monster child star is harmless and amusing enough—assuming you can stomach the little girl. She gave us the pip. (Players, 115 Macdougal St. 254-5076.)

Sight Unseen—Donald Margulies' engrossing new play, which is about an Eric Fischl-type painter who decides to look up an old girlfriend he once treated badly, takes the contemporary art scene to task. Technically, it also plays around with time a good deal, though never sloppily or gratuitously. You end up being affected by a curious kind of resonance—it's earned, not something you've brought with you into the theatre. (2/3/92) (Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477. Closes Sept. 6.)

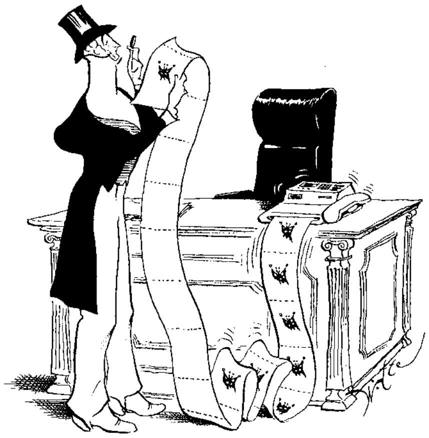
The Tempest—The group called A Matinée Idyll presents free performances of Shakespeare's play in three outdoor locations. (Thursdays and Sundays at the Soldiers and Sailors Monument, Riverside Park at W. 89th St; Fridays at Belvedere Castle, Central Park; and Saturdays in Carl Schurz Park, East End Ave. and 86th St. Performances start at 6.)

Two Trains Running—August Wilson's latest, set in a Pittsburgh luncheonette in 1969, is one of those plays in which all the performances seem to be groping hotly after award nominations and everything is freighted with Meaning. (4/27/92) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200. Closes Aug. 30.)

Under Milk Wood—A production of the Dylan Thomas work, presented by Jean Cocteau Repertory. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at 2nd St. 677-0060.)

LONG RUNS

BEAU JEST: A comedy by James Sherman. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)... **CATS:** Some twenty poems about cats by T. S. Eliot, set to music by Andrew Lloyd Webber. A mighty spectacle about mighty little, owing its effectiveness to Trevor Nunn's direction and to John Napier's sets and costumes. (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200.)... **DANCING AT LUGHNASA:** How you respond to Brian Friel's wistful autobiographical play depends a good deal on your personality and preoccupations. Either you will find it lovely and lyrical or it will strike you as the memory play from Hell. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)... **THE FANTASTICKS:** The longest-running long run recently celebrated its thirty-second birthday. (Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.)... **FOREVER PLAID:** Stuart Ross's loving tongue-in-cheek salute to the "guy groups" of the fifties is a real treat. Bring your mom. Hell, bring the whole family. (Steve McGraw's, 158 W. 72nd St. 595-7400.)... **LOST IN YONKERS:** This family melodrama by Neil Simon, set in Yonkers during the Second World War, is about what happens when a cowering, pathetic man has to leave his two adolescent sons with his intimidating mother for the better part of a year. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 221-1211.)... **LES MISÉRABLES:** The stars of this musical adaptation of the Victor Hugo novel are John Napier's settings and David Hersey's lighting. (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)... **MISS SAIGON:** Oh, the horror! The horror! (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200.)... **NUNSENSE:** A musical comedy by Dan Goggin. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321.)... **PERFECT CRIME:** A murder mystery by Warren Manzi. (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 695-3401.)... **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** This much ballyhooed Andrew Lloyd Webber musical is fun—if you're not bothered by theatre that cares not a whit for words and contains not one ghost of an idea. Except for the sets, everything about the show is negligible. (Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)... **THE SECRET GARDEN:** This lovely musical adaptation of the classic children's story by Frances Hodgson Burnett isn't just a kiddie show. Subtle, charming, intelligent, and wholly literary in its approach to adaptation, it manages both to be faithful to the spirit of the book and to comment on the particular moment in time that produced it. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)... **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** The never-ending nuptials of Anthony Angelo Nunzio and Valentina Lynne Vitale. With audience participation, as you probably know. (St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200.)... **TUBES:** A performance work by Blue Man Group about art and other matters. (Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.)... **THE WILL ROGERS FOLLIES:** The sets by Tony Walton, the direction and choreography by Tommy Tune, the costumes by Willa Kim, and the row upon row of Ziegfeld girls make a feast for the eyes, but the funny bone and heart are neglected. With Mac Davis. (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 730-8200.)



DANCE

BETWEEN early 1909 and mid-1910, Henri Matisse produced a pair of monumental paintings called "Dance." Although they are quite different in feeling, they depict the same subject: five female nudes joined in a circle-dance on a green hill against a stark blue sky. The Apollonian version has come to be known as "Dance I," the Dionysiac version as "Dance II." Both of them are kinetically alive: the figures are pulled by the dance, pushed by it, corkscrewed around and wrenched from plumb. One dancer, on half-point, seems to be doing something Mediterranean in character; another looks like Isadora Duncan; still others have the two-footed intensity we associate with Balkan folk dance. (Matisse's inspiration for these paintings may have included folk dancers he saw in the south of France.) These figures embody a great deal of the experience of watching dance: the way a dancer's line can appear to emerge spontaneously; the way the faces of truly great dancers seem to disappear at peak moments; the way the body can look especially ravishing from uncommon angles; the way a movement that's on the verge of happening can be as exciting to contemplate as a fully achieved action; the way the sight of innocents dancing full out, and unselfconsciously, can seem a metaphor for the joy of living.

During the mammoth Matisse retrospective that's about to move into MOMA, "Dance I" and "Dance II" will be hung side by side for the first time in this country. (For much of this century, to see the first you went to MOMA and for the second to the Hermitage.) Tickets are now on sale.

IN TOWN

Feld Ballets/NY—Final performances of the engagement. *Aug. 24 and Aug. 27 at 8:* "Aurora I," "Danzon Cubano," "Hadji," and "Contra Pose."... ¶ *Aug. 25* at 8 and Aug. 29 at 2:30: "To the Naked Eye," "Kore," "Frets and Women," and "Common Ground."... ¶ Aug. 26 and Aug. 28-29 at 8: "Ion," "Evoe," "Frets and Women," and "Wolfgang Strategies." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800.)

Pilar Rioja—Performing a program of Spanish classical dance and flamenco, including two premières. (Repertorio Español, Gramercy Arts Theatre, 138 E. 27th St. 889-2850. Aug. 25-29 and Sept. 1-2 at 8, and Aug. 30 at 7. Through Oct. 3.)

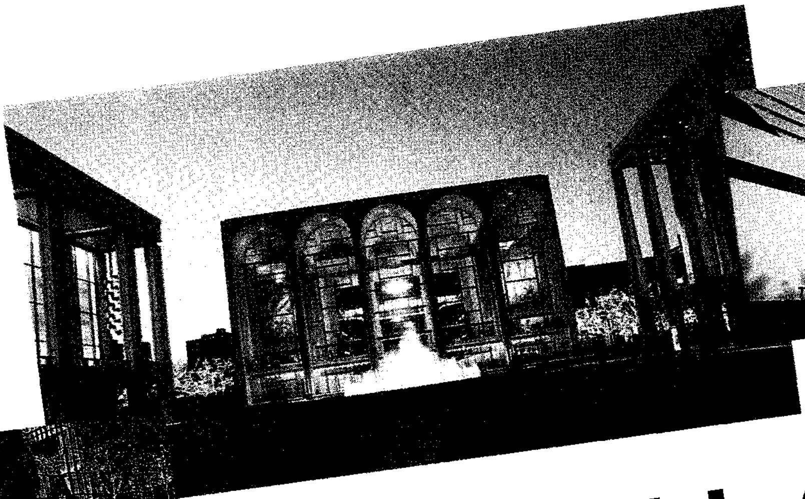
OUT OF TOWN

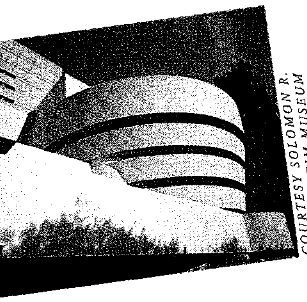
Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival—Final performances of the season. Parsons Dance Company, Aug. 25-27 at 8, Aug. 28 at 8:30, and Aug. 29 at 2 and 8:30. Presenting "Caught," "A Hairy Night on Bald Mountain," "The Envelope," "Nascimento," and "Rise and Fall" (with musical accompaniment by the Turtle Island String Ensemble).... ¶ ODC/San Francisco, Aug. 28 at 8, Aug. 29 at 5, and Aug. 30 at 7. In "Force of Circumstance," "Krazy Kat," and "Loose the Thread." (Becket, Mass. 1-413 243-0745.)

NIGHT LIFE

IF comedy was the rock and roll of the eighties, Caroline's is betting that rock will never die. Inside the club, which reopened a few months back at 1626 Broadway, at 49th Street, you'll find a bar area pulsing with attitude—sleek furnishings, beer-commercial guys and gals, Kris Kross strutting on the video monitors. In the performance space, the tables are arranged in four tiers, two of which can be curtained off, so even on slow nights the club still looks relatively full. The staff is courteous, the seating comfortable—not the rule at such places. By now this second-generation club knows exactly how people like their laughs packaged.

We stopped in the other night to catch Jake Johannsen, a young comic who has lately been running the Leno-Arsenio-Letterman-HBO gantlet. Johannsen, who's thin and studious-looking and has Prince Valiant-coiffed hair, works with a sneaky combination of warmth and sarcasm, shyness and claws. He has a distracted manner, and seems to be addressing the floor or a nearby glass of water much of the time; every so often he lets loose with an offhand gesture or an exasperated glance that's like a perfectly timed cymbal crash. Even when exploring such strip-mined territory as airplane travel, Johannsen can find the untapped vein. Musing on the maddening nonchalance of pilots, he imitates a captain sleepily addressing his passengers after the roof of the plane has blown off. "And if you look up, you can see the sun," he intones. Recalling family car trips from his youth, in Iowa, he describes the "SALT talks" between himself and his sister about "where the exact center of the back seat was." The one-liner, however, is not Johannsen's usual method. Rather, he examines his subjects like a mischievous student dissecting a frog: he turns it this way and that, pokes it, prods it, takes it apart, then puts it on the teacher's chair.





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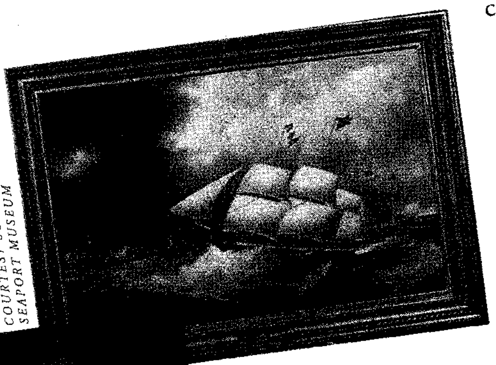
MANHATTAN BOUND

Highlights of the City's Fall Season

New York City is like a World Series contender or a presidential candidate—everyone has an opinion about it. The city itself hardly cares what you say though, as long as you say something. Adoration and disdain, admiration and distrust mix freely in the crucible of public opinion. But the babel of voices arguing about New York comes into harmony on one issue: it's the cultural capital of the world. The upcoming season, with a number of new shows on Broadway and The Museum of Modern Art's extensive Henri Matisse retrospective, will only enhance the city's cultural reputation.



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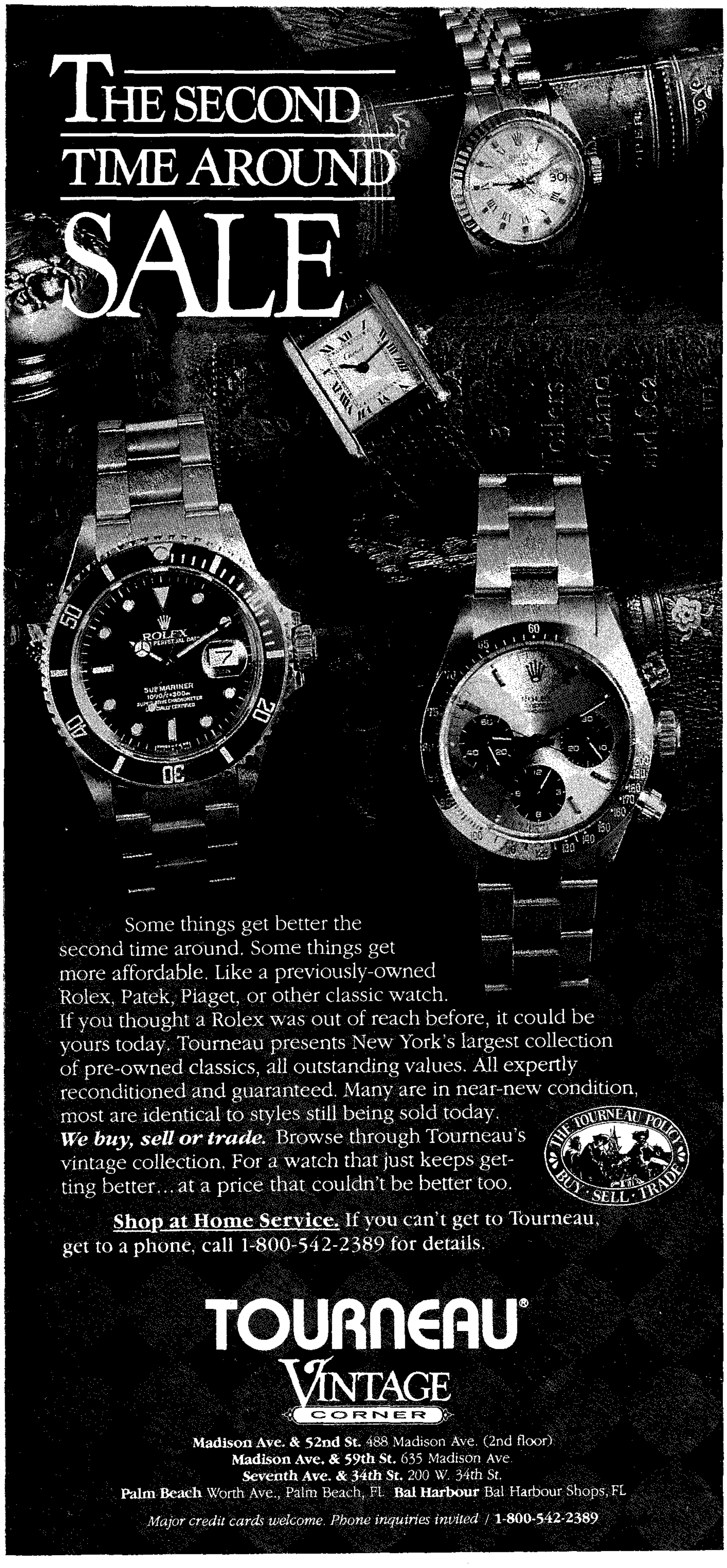

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An Anniversary Year

Several cultural institutions celebrate significant anniversaries this year. Chief among them is the New York Philharmonic, which has been bringing great music to aficionados for 150 years, making it the oldest surviving orchestra in America.

When a group of New York musicians got together and formed the Philharmonic Society in 1842, John Tyler was President, Washington Irving was United States Ambassador to Spain, and Beethoven was still considered a modern composer.

The group's first concert, which took place on December 7th in the Apollo rooms on lower Broadway, opened with Beethoven's Fifth Symphony—the second time this work had been performed in New York—and featured three conductors, each of whom directed a different portion of the program. The Philharmonic's first performance was hailed by *The Albion* as "the commencement of a New Musical Era in this western world."

This season, violinist Midori celebrates the tenth anniversary of her New York Philharmonic debut.

The 1992-93 season is packed with galas, world premieres, and re-creations of historic "firsts." On opening night, September 16th, at Avery Fisher Hall, the current maestro, Kurt Masur, will conduct works by Bernstein, Strauss, and Prokofiev, including a performance by soprano Kathleen Battle. The next set of concerts begins with

Beethoven's Fifth Symphony in tribute to the Philharmonic's first-ever performance.

Other 150th season highlights include thirteen world premieres as well as the return of former music director Zubin Mehta. Mehta will conduct the premiere of a thirteen-part work by Olivier Messiaen that was conceived for him and the Philharmonic.

©William Shisler/Courtesy New York Philharmonic

Former music director Zubin Mehta will conduct the Philharmonic in November and December.

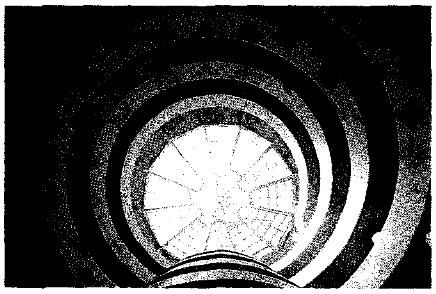
The festivities will peak during 150th Anniversary Week, December 7th-13th. On December 7th, to commemorate the group's first concert, three music directors will again take to the podium: Kurt Masur, Zubin Mehta, and Pierre Boulez. The program will include Richard Strauss's Till Eulenspiegel, Debussy's La Mer, and Dvořák's "New World" Symphony, which received its world premiere from the Philharmonic under Anton Seidl in 1893.

Later in the week, a Young People's Concert will introduce a piece by Philharmonic musician Jon Deak, and Isaac Stern will make his 103rd appearance with the Philharmonic to perform works by Brahms and Bartók. Other guest artists for 1992-93 include Emanuel Ax, Yo-Yo Ma, Midori, Itzhak Perlman, Pinchas Zukerman, and André Watts.

The New Guggenheim

No less a New York institution than the Philharmonic, the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum on Fifth Avenue and Eighty-ninth Street reopened this June after a two-year hiatus for renovations. A new ten-story addition, designed by Gwathmey, Siegel & Associates, allows the museum to mount a wider range of exhibitions in both size and scope. The Guggenheim also opened a Soho branch on lower Broadway this summer.

The reopening exhibition at both locations, "The Guggenheim Museum and the Art of This Century," offers a breathtaking overview of the history and development of the avant-garde set against a backdrop of nineteenth-century painting. The exhibition is drawn from the holdings of the New York museum as well as the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice, and showcases, especially, five decades of collecting. Highlights include new acquisitions of postwar American and European art.



Courtesy Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

After two years of renovations, the Guggenheim has reopened with a new exhibition.

Several sections of the exhibition are worthy of particular notice. "Masterpieces from the Guggenheim Collection" are displayed in the new tower and the Thannhauser Galleries, while the

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downtown Soho branch offers "The Collection In-Depth." And, back uptown, a site-specific installation of multi-colored fluorescent lights by the contemporary artist Dan Flavin fills the rotunda, paying homage to the museum's famous spiral interior.

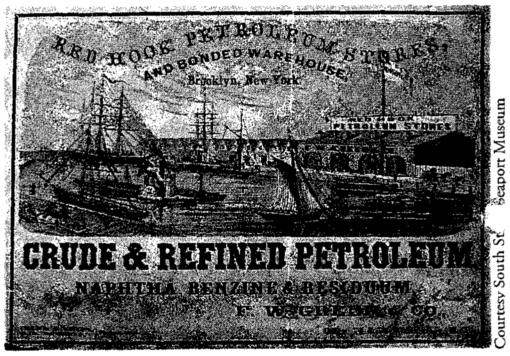
In mid-September, the museum will introduce its first special exhibition since the reopening, "Beyond Zero: The Avant-Garde in Russia 1915-1932." The aim of this ambitious project is to show the development of abstraction in all media in Soviet Russia, from painting and sculpture to photography, posters, architectural and typographic design, theatre sets and costumes, textiles and porcelain.

"Beyond Zero," which will feature more than eight hundred works of art, represents a four-year collaboration with several institutions, including the State Russian Museum in St. Petersburg, the Tretiakov Gallery in Moscow, the Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt, and the (until recently "Soviet") Ministry of Culture. The exhibition will remain open through mid-December.

Pieces of History

This season, art and history come together in "Of Sailing Ships and Sealing Wax," a major exhibition taking place at the South Street Seaport Museum through the end of 1992. The exhibit marks the museum's twenty-fifth anniversary.

Founded in 1967 as part of a grass-roots effort to preserve and revitalize New York's nineteenth-century waterfront, the Seaport Museum has become one of the city's primary cultural resources. In addition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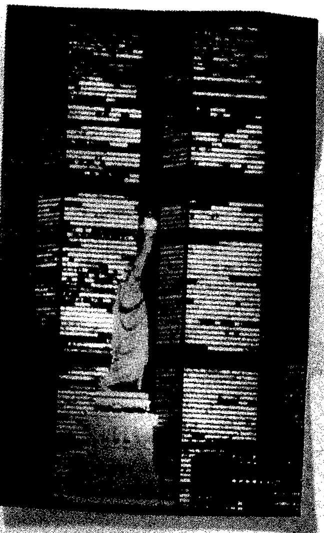
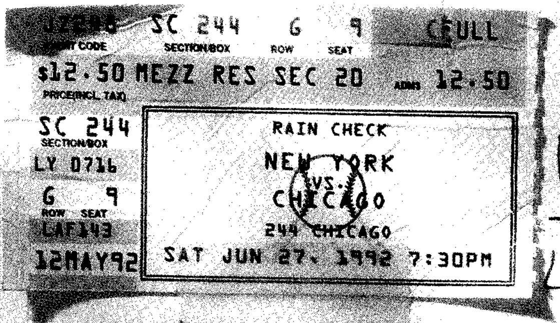
Courtesy South St. Seaport Museum

At the South Street Seaport Museum, hundreds of historic artifacts are on display.



New York is really cool. Today Dad and me got up before Mom and went to Central Park. We saw lots of joggers and rollerskaters. One guy did tons of tricks. Dad said maybe I could get a pair. Then we went back to the hotel and got Mom and went to the Intrepid. WOW! It's big! The guide said you could fit 3 ½ football fields on the Intrepid. We also went to see the new Barosaurus at the American Museum of Natural History. It was awesome! On the way we saw a movie being filmed. I can't wait to tell Steve. We ate hot dogs + ices from a stand. And then we went to the World Trade Center. From the top we could see the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. That's where my great Grandma and Grandpa went through when they came to America. Dad says what we're doing tonight's a surprise. I hope it's a baseball game. I see why Mom keeps saying

BAROSAURUS



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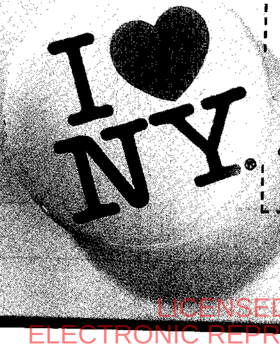

New York State Department of Economic Development

to restored buildings and traffic-free cobblestone streets, it boasts a splendid collection of historic sailing vessels similar to the ones that gave the district its original nickname, the "Street of Sailing Ships."

The New York City chronicled in "Of Sailing Ships and Sealing Wax" was a bustling port where people of diverse backgrounds worked together to create a thriving commercial hub. Exciting and colorful, the East River piers were a hotbed of new ideas and products from around the world.

The exhibition, with hundreds of artifacts of the period, includes marine oil paintings and watercolors, archeological finds from early New York, ship models, tools, folk sculpture, ship memorabilia, maps, historical documents, and scrimshaw.

©Richard Harbert

Crowds gather at the Seaport to enjoy the many events that take place throughout the year.

But that's only for starters. As Museum President Peter Neill points out, "At the Seaport Museum, our history lives. Visitors can walk the same ship decks as nineteenth-century seamen, print a broadside on a hand-operated press, and watch traditional maritime craftsmen at work."

This fall the Seaport is hosting a series of special events that complement the exhibition. Over Labor Day weekend, a rollicking folk festival features free concerts by Leo Kottke, Beausoleil, and Tom Rush, and culminates in fireworks over the East River. On September 24th, the museum will host a gala benefit dinner and dance in honor of its twenty-fifth anniversary, while Columbus Day, October 12th, brings more fireworks and concerts at the Seaport's Pier 16.

Sylvie Tiner writes frequently about travel and culture.

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(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type is used to pick out some of the more notable performers in town. . . . ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead.)

Arthur's Tavern, 57 Grove St. (675-6879)—A quirky, endearing Village watering hole, perpetually decorated for the holidays—all of them. The musicians work in the back of the room, in a well ringed by a bar—a setup that seems to bring out the latent show-biz tendencies in some of the bar's patrons. Mondays belong to the Grove Street Stompers, Tuesdays through Thursdays to Al Bundy, Fridays and Saturdays to Mabel Godwin, and Sundays to Lee Lorenz and the Creole Cookin' Jazz Band. Music from nine-thirty.

Ballroom, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—A tony cabaret attained by passing through an opulent tapas restaurant; if you haven't had dinner, you may never make it to the show. **LYPSINKA,** who will be performing here for the next few weeks, is the creation of John Epperson, who's played the invincible glamour queen in a series of shows so highly regarded that his character recently found its way into the pages of *Esquire's* "Women We Love" issue. The current show is called "Lypsinka! Now It Can Be Lip-Synched!" It finds Lypsinka doing what she does best—lip-synching, of course—to Gloria Swanson, Natalie Wood, Patty Duke, and Judy Garland, among others. Shows Tuesdays through Thursdays at nine, Fridays and Saturdays at nine and eleven-fifteen, and Sundays at nine.

Birdland, 2745 Broadway, at 105th St. (749-2228)—This northern restaurant-bar, an airy, two-tiered space with pastel walls and potted greenery, is a shade too slick for Columbia students but just right for post-collegiate jazz fans. The name is taken from the long-gone midtown pleasure dome that featured Bird himself, whose birthday will be celebrated by the **RED RODNEY** quintet Aug. 28-29. Music from nine. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Jazz, mirrors, a gift shop, and, of course, those incredible shrinking aisles that turn a mid-set dash to the rest room into something of a steeplechase. **BETTY CARTER,** who's performing Aug. 25-30, is a terrific jazz and scat singer who breathes new life into standards. A typical Carter song contains a range of emotions, from heavy-lidded low notes to airy, vibratoless passages in the higher registers. As a performer, she's full of surprises and comic verve. The week beginning Sept. 1 belongs to the **BILLY COBHAM** band and the **LARRY CORYELL** duo, with Vic Juris. First set at nine. Dining.

Blue Willow, 644 Broadway, at Bleecker St. (673-6480)—This room is oddly Victorian for lower Broadway, a region almost exclusively devoted to the celebration of youth culture. You won't find any funky murals or drinks with funny names here, just marble walls, antique furnishings, and a ceiling that would be hard to hit with a baseball. It's an agreeable place for conversation, which is probably why the small jazz combos that set up here nightly often get relegated to being background music. Music from seven-thirty Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. Dining.

Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—A neighborhood bar in the heart of N.Y.U. country. It's advisable to get all your talking done between sets, because, once the first chord is struck, the audience here—with a little help from the management—becomes as quiet as a church congregation. A trio consisting of **KENNY BARRON, BEN RILEY,** and **RAY DRUMMOND** will be performing here through Aug. 29. Music from ten. Dining.

Café Sin-é, 122 St. Marks Pl. (982-0370)—Don't be misled by the sleepy, hole-in-the-wall atmosphere of this bohemian little Irish café, or by the fact that the place has no stage and no music schedule. While patrons have been writing in journals, rolling cigarettes, or lingering over their Rolling Rocks, some pretty fine musicians have been known to turn up and tune up: Sinéad O'Connor, Marianne Faithfull, and Luka Bloom, to name a heady few. Music generally begins at about eight-thirty.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—In Bemelmans Bar, which is just across the hall from the Café Carlyle, **KURT WIETING** presides at the piano from nine-thirty Tuesdays through Saturdays.

CBGB & OMFUG, 315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—Rock and roll always sounds best in a dump, which may be why this legendary club is still thriving: the management has had the good sense not to renovate. In recent years, CB's has become something of an empire; the club is now flanked by a pizzeria/boutique on one side and a bar/performance space on the other—all your shopping needs taken care of in one convenient location. **THE JESUS LIZARD,** a powerful alternative-rock band led by a transfixing front man named David Yow, comes in on Aug. 29. **DRAMARAMA** appears on Sept. 2. Music from eight on Sundays and Mondays, from eight-thirty Tuesdays through Thursdays, and from nine-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays.

Club 53, Sixth Ave. at 53rd St. (261-5853)—A new cabaret in the New York Hilton. It's a pleasantly lulling spot, where you can sink into deep sofas and eat off of big plates. **PEGGY LEE** winds up her engagement on Aug. 29. Shows Tuesdays through Thursdays at eight-forty-five, and Fridays and Saturdays at eight-forty-five and ten-thirty.

Condon's, 117 E. 15th St. (254-0960)—A candlelit basement restaurant within ticket-scalping distance of the Palladium. Perhaps because of its out-of-the-loop location, Condon's is one of the city's more low-key jazz clubs, a place where the seating arrangement doesn't seem intended as some kind of punishment. The wonderfully campy singer **PHOEBE LÉGÈRE**—she's also a trained pianist, cellist, and accordionist, and she has very few inhibitions—is here through Aug. 30. Bebop pianist **TOMMY FLANAGAN** leads a trio as of Sept. 1. Music at nine-thirty and eleven-thirty Tuesdays through Sundays; Flanagan will add late sets at one on Fridays and Saturdays.

Cornelia Street Café, 29 Cornelia St. (989-9319)—In the basement of this tucked-away Village restaurant-bar is a narrow, white-brick-walled room, decorated with a few tables and steampipes, where you'll find music, poetry readings, and theatre-of-the-cramped. The restaurant itself is a wine-and-candlelight neighborhood café; downstairs, there's a do-it-yourself, sixties-coffeehouse aesthetic at work.

Dan Lynch, 221 Second Ave., at 14th St. (677-0911)—Outside Dan Lynch, you'll come across a lot of suspicious characters who'll claim to know you; inside you'll find a pupil-dilating, brown-on-brown bar. The place brightens up considerably at ten, with a variety of live blues, including vamps of the "put on your red dress" variety.

Duplex, 61 Christopher St., at Seventh Ave. (255-5438)—A two-floor entertainment center. The cheery white downstairs bar has French windows giving on to the bustle of Seventh Avenue, but the real clamor is indoors. Everyone is a star here—the pianist, the bartender, the waiters, and the audience. Pop standards are sung/shouted, usually with altered, risqué lyrics; wisecracks are fired across the room; and everyone laughs too hard. Upstairs there's a quieter bar and a cabaret, where you'll find a variety of performers nightly.

Jimmy Cliff at the Ritz

Fat Tuesday's, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7902)—The seating arrangements in this long, narrow, red-velvet-and-mirror-walled basement make flying coach seem roomy; nevertheless, it's one of the city's top jazz spots—thanks largely to the club's talent bookers. But watch your head. Saxophonist **SCOTT HAMILTON** leads a quintet Aug. 25-30; pianist **AHMAD JAMAL** commences on Sept. 1. On Mondays, guitarist-inventor **LES PAUL** leads a trio. Music from eight. Dining.

Gonzalez y Gonzalez, 625 Broadway, at Houston St. (473-8787)—Loud, brash, and big—de rigueur for the lower-Broadway dining scene. The theme is, of course, Mexican, and you get the whole enchilada—a giant cactus here, a parade-float sombrero there, animal skulls, religious artifacts, and chili-pepper clusters everywhere. The stage is in the rear, about a city block from the entrance. Music Wednesdays and Thursdays from about ten-thirty, and Fridays and Saturdays from twelve-thirty.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St.—This is the current name of the current home of the New York Swing Dance Society, a group of Lindy Hop enthusiasts who've been putting on Sunday-night dance parties for several years now. (Until recently, the building was identified as the Song of Singapore Theatre, after the musical that ran there; before that, the group danced a few blocks to the south, at the Cat Club.) **CLIFF SMALL'S** orchestra is in action on Aug. 30. Sets begin at eight. For information on the Society, call 696-9737.

J's, 2581 Broadway, at 97th St. (666-3600)—An Upper West Side jazz room, one steep flight up from the hurly-burly. Jazz people are on the premises nightly. **ROY MERIWETHER'S** trio holds forth on Aug. 27, followed by the **JOE ROCCISANO** big band on Aug. 28 and **JUDY BARNETT'S** foursome on Aug. 29. Music from eight-thirty Sundays through Thursdays, and from nine Fridays and Saturdays. Dining.

Judys', 49 W. 44th St. (764-8930)—An intimate, burgundy-walled *boîte* attached to the Iroquois Hotel. In the front room, which is decorated with photos of famous Judys, a pianist keeps the happy-hour barbirds occupied. In the dining room, vocalists work out at nine. Closed Sundays.

Knickerbocker, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—Brass rails, vintage posters, Hirschfeld drawings, a menu full of items like bangers and mash, and a piano. Knickerbocker is an airy, good-spirited place and, while music often takes a back seat to conversation, some able piano-and-bass teams turn up regularly. Aug. 26-29 belongs to **STEVE KUHN** and **MIKE FORMANEK.** On Sept. 2, **JAMES WILLIAMS** and **CHRISTIAN MC BRIDE** get under way. Music from nine-forty-five.

Knitting Factory, 47 E. Houston St., near Mulberry St. (219-3055)—The club most likely to feature an electric-rake player. Run by a couple of forward-looking Wisconsonites, the Knitting Factory takes in all manner of avant, neo, and post ensembles. The atmosphere is low-key bohemian—it's like a frat house for the avant-garde. Music after nine.

Lauterbach's Brooklyn Beat, 335 Prospect Ave., at Sixth Ave., Brooklyn. (1-718 788-9140)—It's an improbable bar in an unlikely location, but Lauterbach's has spawned a scene of sorts—and the owners have a wall of press clippings to prove it. In its short life span as a rock venue (it has a longer one as a neighborhood bar—the kind of place where Archie Bunker might feel at home), the club has become HQ for a tight little community of Brooklyn bands, a development that has apparently brought in enough money for the club's recent facelift. Still, it's not as though you need a tux to get in the door.

Lone Star Roadhouse, 240 W. 52nd St. (245-2950)—It's named for its Texas décor, but perhaps a more apt name would be the Second Chance, since so many lost, forgotten, or faded rockers turn up here. But the club's busy schedule includes a variety of newer acts, too. **LYLE LOVETT** will be here for a free concert at noon on Aug. 25. (He'll also be opening up for Bonnie Raitt at Jones Beach Aug. 26-27.) Lovett is a hyperliterate, wickedly off-center country singer who works gospel and big-band blues into his songs. His latest record is "Joshua Judges Ruth." **BLUE RODEO,** which will share a bill with **GREG TROOPER** on the evening of Aug. 25, is a top-flight Canadian bar band that juxtaposes smooth, straight-ahead country with rougher-hewn rock and roll. The band has a pair of fine songwriters, and its live shows are bright and thumping and loud. The **ZOO,** which features **MICK FLEETWOOD,** will be here on Sept. 2; **SOUL KITCHEN** performs on the same bill. Show times vary. Dining.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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TO THE RESCUE

Did you know that Dalmatians were adopted as firemen's mascots, after the Civil War, because they were long-winded and could keep up with the horses? Or that a curfew, from the French "couvre-feu," *was originally an ordinance requiring that all hearth fires be extinguished before bedtime? Or that a person weighing a hundred and sixty pounds and jumping into a firemen's rescue net from three floors up impacts with a force of five thousand pounds? (Forget your movie-fantasy image of the net as a sort of trampoline—in the great Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire, of March 25, 1911, a hundred and forty-six persons perished, among them dozens who leapt into the nets spread out below.) You learn all this, and lots more, at the New York City Fire Museum (278 Spring Street), a Beaux-Arts building that from 1904 to 1959 was an actual firehouse. The Collection Highlight of the Month—a Cooper hose jacket used to prevent leaks—is hardly worth a detour, but the museum sure is.*

Among the many engines on display, one is particularly striking—No. 8 from Astoria, an 1857 model, which, with its bronze bells, etched-glass lamps, and painted tiger emblem, today looks like a wonderful oversized toy. And among the period photographs is a vivid scene of a fire carriage whose horses seem to be bearing down right on the viewer—one noble-looking beast has all four legs off the ground and its ears laid back.

After you have visited the museum, your ears, however citified, can never again be deaf to the distant wail of a fire engine—you'll imagine the fear that citizens of an earlier time must have felt when they heard the watchman's rattle (some of these are on display) and reached for their leather buckets (two were required in each household) to run to the aid of the firemen.

Ludlow Street Café, 165 Ludlow St. (353-0536)—Up until a few years ago, this stretch of the Lower East Side was only for the bold. But now that the artists have moved in, if you want to get any more bohemian, you'll have to go to Williamsburg. The Ludlow Street Café, which was one of the first places to stake a claim in the new frontier, is an unassuming basement restaurant-bar, where you can eat cheap, drink cheap, and catch live music nightly. Mondays belong to **BEAT RODEO**, a straight-shooting bar band that plays a mix of country, blues, Dylan, the Byrds, the Velvets, and various pop curiosities.

Manny's Car Wash, 1558 Third Ave., at 87th St. (369-2583)—This blues bar stands apart from the Upper East Side's usual array of singles bars, and has become a big draw for the neighborhood's army of post-collegiates. The neon beer signs, Manny's caps, and funky drink concoctions lend the place a frat-house aura, but don't let that put you off: this long, dark, brick-walled room is a good spot to catch blues artists both major and minor. Sets from nine-fifteen, except Sundays, when they begin at eight-forty-five.

Marquee, 547 W. 21st St. (929-3257)—A rock club one block from the end of the world. **TOAD THE WET SPROCKET** (a deceptively frivolous name lifted from a Monty Python skit) deserves a place at the forefront of the international brigade of young guitar-based rockers fighting to emerge from the shadow of R.E.M., U2, and the Smiths. Their powerful album, "Fear," could have been recorded in Athens, or Manchester, or Glasgow, or even in Seattle, but, as it turns out, Toad is a quartet of fresh-faced young fellows from Santa Barbara. Go figure. The band will be here on Aug. 25. Performing on the same bill will be the **GIN BLOSSOMS**.

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken. (1-201 798-4064)—A plain blue back room whose far wall is decorated with round things: a Frisbee, some singles, a drum head, and the woofer from a speaker cabinet, to name a few. The beer of choice here is Rolling Rock—by a landslide—and the crowd may make you feel as if you have a midterm to study for, but many of the bands that play here today will be playing somewhere more expensive tomorrow. **THE JESUS LIZARD, TAR,** and **CELL** are here on Aug. 28, and the **DELEVANTES** appear on Aug. 29. Shows are usually at ten on Thursdays, at eleven on Fridays and Saturdays, and at nine other nights.

Michael's Pub, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—There's apparently nothing that can keep Woody Allen from carting his clarinet to Michael's Pub for his Monday-night Dixieland binges. Non-filmmakers can usually be found onstage here the rest of the week, in a main dining room that strives for the appearance of a British pub but looks more like a good old American family restaurant. Still, there's a real nice red telephone booth when you walk in the door. Singer-and pianist Jo Thompson, whose career got an early boost from Walter Winchell, is in the midst of her first engagement in this town in more than thirty years. Shows Tuesdays through Saturdays at nine-fifteen and eleven-fifteen.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza. (632-5000)—Not to be confused with its richer cousin, the Rainbow Room, which is just down the hall. There, you'll find expansive Art Deco glitter; here, intimate nineties glitter. The performers, with their backs to the window, compete with a view of the Hudson, the George Washington Bridge, and beyond. The well-received Irving Berlin revue, "Say It with Music," marches on. **KAYE BALLARD** heads the distinguished cast. Shows from nine. Dining. Closed Mondays.

Red Blazer Too, 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—A place where a fella and a gal can put on the feedbag, get a little tight, and cut a rug. Mondays belong to the Smith Street Jazz Society, Tuesdays and Fridays to **VINCE GIORDANO AND THE NIGHTHAWKS,** Thursdays to Stan Rubin's big band, and Saturdays to Bob Cantwell and His Stompers. The Wednesday-night lineup is forever changing. Aug. 26 belongs to Frank Fighera and his ensemble, Slam; and on Sept. 2 you can catch the Bob Litwak group, featuring Scott Hamil–ton and George Masso. Show times vary.

Ritz, 254 W. 54th St. (541-8900)—This decaying theatre, once the home of Studio 54, is now the site of one of the city's biggest, oldest, and loudest rock clubs, which was formerly located in the East Village. The club features a broad stage, mobile-home-size speakers, plenty of room to shimmy, and, for the sedentary, a giant Big Brother video screen. Reggae maestros **JIMMY CLIFF** and **BURNING SPEAR** share a bill on Aug. 25, along with Majek Fashek and Zulu Spear. Show times vary.

Sounds of Brazil, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—The closest thing in Manhattan to a rain forest, this venerable club has many selling points: tropical drinks, Brazilian food, faux palm trees, a thatch-roofed bar. The live music is primarily from Africa, Brazil, and the Caribbean, and the dance floor is usually hopping. Music from nine-thirty Tuesdays through Thursdays, and from ten-thirty Fridays and Saturdays. Dining. Closed Sundays.

Space at Chase, 98 Third Ave., at 12th St. (475-1407)—One of those East Village joints where, for a few bucks, you can hear a handful of local rock bands. As is usually the case at these establishments, some of the bands will make you want to cower under the pinball machine while others will make you want to dance and shout and start your own independent label. As for décor, there's a bar, some chairs, some tables, some walls, a ceiling, and two dart boards. Music from nine-thirty, except on Tuesdays, when it starts at seven.

Supper Club, 240 W. 47th St. (921-1940)—Upstairs at this gilt-railinged, lamé-curtained club is a plush little nook called the Blue Room, which boasts celestial-motif wallpaper and a profusion of deep-sea blue. The racket of midtown can't find you here. **ANN HAMPTON CALLAWAY** performs Tuesdays through Thursdays at nine; and **CHARLES DE FOREST** holds forth Tuesdays through Saturdays from ten. Mr. DeForest, who has been quietly working the piano-bar circuit since the early fifties, has an alert, aristocratic face that has earned him the sobriquet "the Fred Astaire of the keys." At times, his voice is permeated by a stately sadness, but his dry, self-deprecating wit acts as a counterbalance. Mr. DeForest culls much of his material from old movies and musicals, and he likes to put his discoveries in context, making him two parts performer, one part reviewer. There's nothing recherché about his show, however: anyone interested in how to put over a lyric would do well to pay him a visit.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—One seldom sees jazz musicians leaning back to back as they kick out the jams, or craning their necks to harmonize into a mike. That's not to say that they don't interact onstage, but they're usually more subtle about it than rockers are. The nod, the glance, the faint smile are more common gestures, and this brown-toned ski chalet of a jazz club is a fine place to study such group dynamics. The **NICK BRIGNOLA** quartet is here though Aug. 30, and the **MAL WALDRON** quintet begins a two-week engagement on Sept. 1. An electrified big band belonging to trumpeter **MILES EVANS** is in action on Mondays. Tee-off time is ten. Dining.

Tramps, 45 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—A broad, spacious, and agreeable club, located near what was once called the Ladies' Mile but might now be termed the pool-hall district. The pillared, loftlike room is decorated in a hodgepodge, vaguely Bourbon Street manner, and sight lines are above average. Aug. 28 is given over to Nigerian juju star Sir Shina Peters (with a twenty-two piece band) as well as Chief Paulsem Kalu. On Aug. 29, Arrow will intone the sounds of Soca, in a double bill with the Antiguan group Ranking Cobra. Music is usually from eight on weeknights and from eight-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays.

Village Gate, 160 Bleecker St. (475-5120)—Located on a beery strip of the Village where every day is spring break, this club offers three floors of fun. Since this makes for rather confusing traffic patterns, you may want to use the buddy system. In the downstairs room, which is as big and plain as a mess hall, Mondays after nine are set aside for salsa bands. On Aug. 31, the stage will be occupied by Oscar D'Leon and jazz cellist—yes, we said cellist—Allen Hoist. Sets at nine-thirty and eleven-thirty. . . . ¶One flight up, in the Terrace Bar, the Larry Goldings trio works out Aug. 26-30, and on Sept. 1 harpist Daphne Hellman fills her customary Tuesday-night engagement. Music from ten.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The late Max Gordon, who opened this holiest of jazz shrines in 1935, once described the club's early patrons as a mix of "poets, W.P.A. writers, hustlers, broads on the make, and moochers." **ARTHUR TAYLOR'S WAILERS** claim Aug. 25-30. Taylor is a drummer with a formidable technique, but he uses it to energize his band members rather than beat them into submission. When a musician takes a solo, Taylor stays with him at every turn, commenting, challenging, embellishing. And, like a good conductor, he can keep tabs on everyone at once. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays. Music after nine-thirty.

WETLANDS, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Two floors of no-nuke veggie entertainment and consciousness-raising. Listen to bands play in *the Summer of Love*-muralled back room; buy a tie-dyed T-shirt at the Volkswagen-bus curio shop; catch up on current events at the bulletin board and community calendar. Or, if you'd rather just be mellow, crash out in the basement hippie love pad. Music at ten.

ZINNO, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—One of those snazzy, awninged eateries you've seen nestled amid brownstones in the Village and always wondered about. The food is Italian, the atmosphere is pastels and soft lights, and the musicians, who set up in a room between the bar and the dining room, are first-rate. Guitarist **TAL FARLOW** and bassist **GARY MAZZAROPPI** are here as of Aug. 31. Music from eight every night but Sundays, when sets begin at seven-thirty.

EDGE OF NIGHT LIFE

ONCE upon a time, when we still had summer, those who got away returned tanned, lissome, windblown, slightly hung over, and in desperate need of a pillow. They had "good time" written on their faces as conspicuously as a Lauren logo dots a polo shirt. Now whole ferryloads return Banquo-pale, grossly hung over, scurfy with junk-food crumbs, and so crazed by cabin fever that they seem objects of pity. But the weirdness is most dramatic around their eyes—bloodshot, dilated, sunken, as if the weekenders spent their Saturday night cramming for the bar exam by penlight. What kind of drugs are they *taking* this year? "Drugs!" snorted one young lady from Davis Park at Benny's Burritos on a recent Sunday night. "I wish! No, there's not a lot to do on Fire Island when the weather's bad. We don't even have a movie theatre, so we watch videos all weekend long. It's like a film festival."

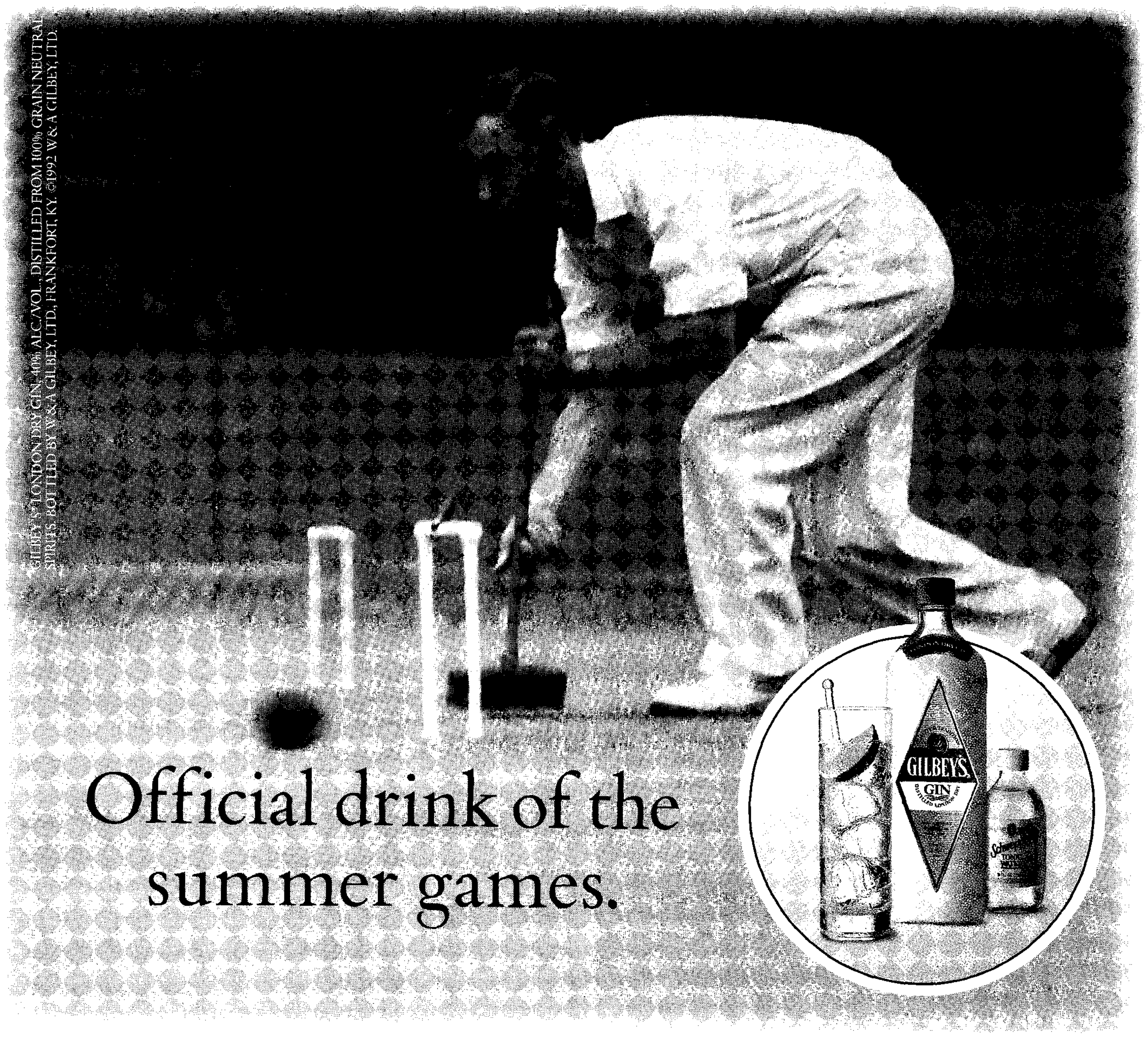
"I saw 'The Country Girl' six times on Friday night," a temporary Sag Harborite claimed. "Every time someone else came in from a futile attempt at going out, we had to start it again. By the fifth time, I started hoping Grace Kelly would end up with William Holden, just to break the monotony."

"Oh, we had such a fun night," a young man from Fire Island Pines said. "First we watched 'JFK'—all three hours of it. Then we went right into 'Let Him Have It,' about a nineteen-year-old epileptic British boy who gets hanged for a murder he didn't commit. That really put me in the mood to go out."

"Eric Rohmer," a woman moaned, so loudly that she could be heard back in Sneden's Landing. "We watched not one but *two* Eric Rohmer movies our guests brought on Saturday night. If it rains next week, I've decided to watch my duck sit on her eggs. Same excitement, and I don't have to rewind."

"They're not even speaking in my house," another Pines resident said. "Someone taped over the end of 'Auntie Mame,' right where Agnes returns pregnant, with a rerun of 'In Living Color,' and they didn't stop screaming about respecting other people's property until five in the morning."

Either the sun comes out for a week or we need a little Christmas now. In Hawaii, just to play it safe.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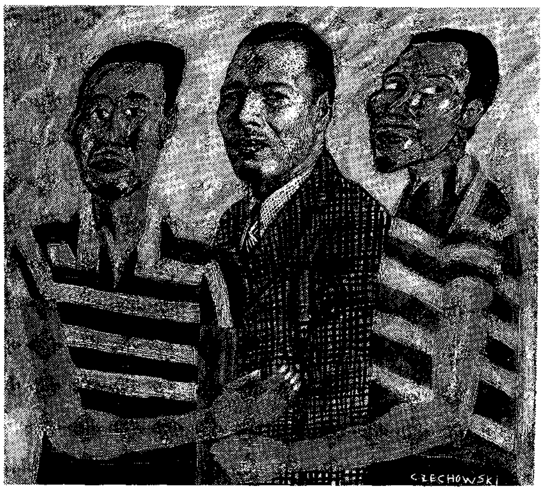


William H. Johnson

ART

William H. Johnson, who was born in 1901, in Florence, South Carolina, moved to New York in 1918, and soon enrolled in the school of the National Academy of Design. In 1926, he moved to France, and then, after a brief return to the States, to Scandinavia. He lived there for nearly a decade while travelling widely with his wife, a Danish textile artist, until 1938. Landscapes from this period, and expressionistic portraits such as his remarkable "Young Pastry Cook" (ca. 1928-30), recall Vlaminck and Soutine. And Alice Neel seems particularly kindred. Johnson in effect cleaned his palette when he got back to America, and his work assumed the cadences of the black Southern folkloric tradition, both rural and urban.

Johnson's work from 1938 to about 1945 includes many bright, deceptively simple watercolors in which black soldiers are depicted boarding trains, marching, fighting, convalescing, or being killed. There is also a buoyant array of highly stylized history paintings commemorating such important figures as Nat Turner and the signers of the Yalta agreements.

Around the time of his wife's death, in 1943, the artist turned increasingly to religious hymns and traditional spirituals for inspiration. He also returned to Denmark for a last visit. By 1947, Johnson's career as an artist was over: thoroughly incapacitated by what had been diagnosed as syphilis-induced paresis, he was committed to Long Island's Central Islip State Hospital, where he died in 1970.

The over-all shape of Johnson's oeuvre may best be sensed in a small but representative show at the Studio Museum in Harlem (through September 20). A much larger show at the Whitney concentrates on Johnson's wartime "Homecoming" and goes into his later styles in greater depth, but this show could prove misleading if seen without the benefit of the other. A "positive image" of black American culture seems to be the Whitney's overweening message. Johnson's worldliness and formal ties, however, may have been slighted.

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain" includes more than a hundred works of art, from a wood ceiling to a mosaic dado to an ivory coffin. Through Sept. 27. . . . ¶ The recent donation of the Perls collection—a hundred and sixty-three objects from the kingdom of Benin—has substantially redefined the museum's African holdings. This exhibition of the collection is a welcome relief from the rigid theatre of many of the museum's blockbusters: it enables viewers to make their own discoveries. Through Sept. 13. . . . ¶ "Modern Design: 1890-1990" shows off the museum's holdings in twentieth-century furniture, architectural and design drawings, glass, ceramics, and other objects. Through Oct. 25. . . . **note:** The museum's roof garden, planted with eight sculptures by Rodin, is open when the weather permits. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—"The Photographs of Lucas Samaras" includes thirty works from his many series of Polaroids. Starts Aug. 29. . . . ¶ "The Young Rebel in American Photography, 1950-1970" presents work by, among others, Diane Arbus, Larry Clark, Bruce Davidson, Robert Frank, and Lee Friedlander. Through Oct. 13. (See Photography listing.). . . ¶ A small, pleasant exhibition of the Finnish designer Kaj Franck's gloriously spare designs. Particularly impressive is his Kilta tableware, which was in production from 1953 to 1975 and still looks contemporary. Its finely tuned colors, in such contrasting shades as deep aqua green and chartreuse, seem like refined versions of our own Fiestaware. Through Oct. 12. . . . **note:** The museum's sculpture garden, at 14 W. 54th St., is open, free, on Fridays and Saturdays from 6 to 10, with musicians from the Juilliard School performing at 7:30. This summer's program is dedicated to the music of John Cage. Through Aug. 29. (The museum is open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—Dan Flavin's huge pink neon Maypole, with its surrounding neon rigging—an enlarged version of a 1971 piece—is for the moment the lone occupant of Frank Lloyd Wright's restored Fifth Avenue snail. The Flavin has clout, especially at night, when it conjures the honky-tonk Art Deco motifs of South Miami Beach. Meanwhile, the permanent collection, in the new annex, looks, on the whole, forlorn: crowded, badly lit, and compressed by having a museum shop at both the top and the bottom of the mini-rotunda. Through Aug. 26. (Open daily, except Thursdays, 10 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway—The new branch, in a loft building whose floors have been transformed by Arata Isozaki, is sleek, with large paintings by Andy Warhol, Antoni Tàpies, Joan Mitchell, and Roy Lichtenstein decorating the reception area. But the inaugural show, grandiosely titled "From Brancusi to Bourgeois," is shameless. It includes, on the ground floor, a group of works by Joseph Beuys and Louise Bourgeois. While her enclosures and display cases are sensationally potent, his installations look as if they had been plunked down in an automobile showroom. On the vast bisected floor upstairs, the situation is even worse. On one side, white-on-white paintings by Robert Ryman seem to have been hung as backdrops to a group of Brancusi sculptures, while, on the other side, several floor pieces by Carl Andre undermine an assortment of extraordinary paintings and drawings by Kandinsky, who, as ever, is at once this museum's bulwark and its sacrificial lamb. Through Sept. 7. (Open daily, except Tuesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings until 10.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—"Homecoming: William H. Johnson and Afro-America, 1938-46" includes eighty paintings made after Johnson returned to the United States from Europe and developed his simplified brilliant-color style. Through Oct. 25. . . . ¶ An auxiliary exhibition, "Parallel Visions," draws on the museum's permanent collection to provide a context for viewing the works of Johnson. Among the artists represented here are Philip Evergood, Edward Hopper, Jacob Lawrence, Ben Shahn, and Alice Trumbull Mason. Through Oct. 25. (Another complementary show, a survey of Johnson's career, can be seen at the Studio Museum in Harlem, through Sept. 20.). . . ¶ "The Paintings of George Bellows." Bellows began as a typical Ashcan-school painter—a maker of gritty, exuberantly rendered New York scenes, such as nude bathing boys jumping into the Hudson. He also made good portraits of tough-eyed working-class kids staring out from dark-brown fields. But he was at his best when he was orchestrating urban noise. Bellows could capture crowds like no other painter of the fast-growing urban scene. This skill, of course, was most visible in his paintings of boxers, which have become symbols of American genre painting of the early twentieth century, especially of the sort this museum champions. Bellows was also quite good in his small landscapes of Maine. They have luscious brushwork, with occasional moments of shocking color—insistent greens and reds. But shortly after he hit his stride, in the teens, Bellows' work deteriorated dramatically, into flabby scenes of the Newport set and stiff portraits of ladies who appear to be suffering from premature rigor mortis. Yet in the midst of this aesthetic depression Bellows managed to paint some of the most haunting works of his career, such as a portrait of the artist's mother, with an eerie manipulation of light, and a prison picture of Edith Cavell, a British nurse executed during the First World War. Through Aug. 30. ¶ The third part of a show of recent additions to the museum's collection; more than seventy paintings and sculptures are included. Through Sept. 20. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—"Painters of a New Century: The Eight & American Art," an exhibition devoted to the work of the turn-of-the-century painters known as the Eight: Arthur B. Davies, William Glackens, Robert Henri, Ernest Lawson, George Luks, Maurice Prendergast, Everett Shinn, and John Sloan. Through Sept. 21. . . . ¶ Complementing the "Eight" show is a smaller display of prints, drawings, watercolors, and pastels by these same artists, as well as by George Bellows, Jerome Myers, and Walt Kuhn. Through Sept. 21. . . . ¶ "Tacit Transit," a new installation, by Korean-born artist Jin Soo Kim, that consists of wire-mesh modules and found objects. Through Sept. 6. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—"The Prehistoric Mammals of Charles R. Knight" features thirty paintings and sculptural re-creations by the artist, who, in preparation for his work, painstakingly studied both fossils and living animals. Through Nov. 1. . . . ¶ A large exhibition titled "Global Warming—Understanding the Forecast," which was developed by the museum and the Environmental Defense Fund. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Cooper-Hewitt Museum, Fifth Ave. at 91st St.—Since its founding, in 1897, by the three Hewitt sisters, whose goal was to elevate taste in America, the Cooper-Hewitt has accumulated a marvellous, albeit rarely displayed, library of the decorative arts. "A Design Resource" is a rotating sampler of nearly a thousand objects drawn from the museum's collection. "Animals in Design" and "Designs for Seating" are among the new sections. Through Aug. 30. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge from 5 to 9; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—"The Making of America" consists of twenty-nine letters and official documents by such figures as Julia Ward Howe, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Benjamin Franklin. Through Aug. 30. . . . ¶ Pierpont Morgan's librarian, Belle da Costa Greene (she was also the first director of the Library when it became a public institution), is the subject of a small show of photographs, letters, and memorabilia. Through Aug. 30. . . . ¶ Selections from the permanent collection are on view. Through Aug. 30. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10:30 to 5, Sundays, 1 to 5.)

Museum of American Folk Art, Columbus Ave. at 65th St.—"The Art of Embellishment" features fifty painted and stencilled objects—doors, pieces of furniture, tinware, and textiles—from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American homes. Through Sept. 6. . . . ¶ The American hand-carved walking stick (more varieties than you can shake one at) is the subject of "Step Lively: The Art of the Folk Cane." Through Sept. 13. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11:30 to 7:30.)

Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St.—"St. Petersburg as It Was Leningrad" features forty lithographs by the Russian graphic artist Anatoly Kaplan (1902-1980). Through Aug. 30. . . . ¶ "Walt Whitman and New York." The Long Island-born Brooklynite is celebrated in a show that juxtaposes prose and poetry with nineteenth-century paintings, prints, and photographs. Through Aug. 30. . . . ¶ Two shows of New York images. "Empire City," an exhibition of all the paintings and drawings in the Robert R. Preato collection, features work by George Luks, Abraham Walkowitz, and Theresa Bernstein. "Recent Gifts: Works on Paper" is a display of woodcuts, lithographs, etchings, drawings, and watercolors from the thirties to the eighties. Among the etchings are a group of thirteen made between 1927 and 1930 by the Social Realist Philip Reisman (1904-92). Both shows through Aug. 30. . . . ¶ "Roots and Heritage in Latin American Art," a show of paintings, prints, and posters by Carlos Gonzales Ortiz, Maria Teresa Angulo, Elio Beltran, Bianca Huizard, Rosita Maldonado, and others. Through Aug. 30. . . . ¶ "Broadway! 125 Years of Musical Theatre." A large assortment of objects—including paintings, posters, scripts, models, sheet music, and memorabilia—from nearly seventy-five productions that have bowed on the Great White Way. First seen in New York last summer at the IBM Gallery. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

National Academy of Design, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—A hundred and twenty-four prints, drawings, and watercolors by the German artist Lovis Corinth (1858-1925). Through Sept. 13. . . . ¶ "Masterworks of American Impressionism from the Pfeil Collection" features eighty-seven paintings, by such artists as Mary Cassatt, Childe Hassam, Lila Cabot Perry, and John Twachtman. Through Aug. 30. . . . ¶ "The Artist's Eye," the first in a series of exhibitions to be curated by artists who are academy members. Philip Pearlstein has done the selecting here; among the forty works on view are Ryder's "Marine" and Sargent's "Portrait of Monet." Through Sept. 27. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5; Friday evenings until 8, with no admission charge after 5.)

New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park W., at 77th St.—"Ansel Adams: The Early Years" covers the period from 1919 to 1941 and includes, along with several of the famous Western landscapes, lesser-known still-lifes, portraits, and views of New York City. Through Oct. 11. . . . ¶ An exhibition, mostly of paintings, from the collection of the Century Association. Some of the works, such as Albert Bierstadt's "Guerrilla Warfare, Civil War" (1862) and Winslow Homer's "Nurse and Child" (1868), were accepted by the association in lieu of an initiation fee. Through Oct. 11. . . . ¶ Convention fever lives on in "Party Time: Presidential Campaigns Since 1832," a large gathering of glorious political artifacts. Through Sept. 20. (In conjunction with the exhibition, the society and the League of Women Voters will offer voter registration on Sept. 17 from 5 to 8 P.M.) (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 11 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8; Sundays, 11 to 5.)

Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum, 32-37 Vernon Blvd., at 33rd Rd., Long Island City—Noguchi (1904-88) designed this oasis for more than two hundred and fifty of his own sculptures. The entire range of his work is on view, from the early surrealistic biomorphic sculptures through several types of stone carvings, and including documentation of his prodigious public-art projects. The centerpiece of the museum is a peaceful, ivy-walled garden dotted with sculptures. (Open Wednesdays and Saturdays, 11 to 6.)

Queens Museum of Art, Flushing Meadow Park—"Colombia: Contemporary Images," an exhibition of paintings and sculptures by thirty-five native Colombians. Through Sept. 13. . . . ¶ Drawings and distorted silhouettes by Brazilian installation artist Regina Silveira. Through Sept. 13. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5.)

Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 W. 125th St.—A retrospective of the career of William H. Johnson, in conjuction with the "Homecoming" show at the Whitney Museum. Through Sept. 20. . . . ¶ An exhibition of a dozen large-scale paintings and a dozen works on paper by William T. Williams. Through Nov. 15. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

GALLERIES

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Mondays through Fridays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Paul Georges—As the New York art world wraps up its traditional month of indolence, ten paintings of leonine vigor have somehow appeared uptown. Georges, who was born in 1923 and lives in New York and in Normandy, is known as a champion of the figure in art, and has often been called a neo-baroque painter because he thinks big and paints allegories. But this sort of talk makes him sound academic, when even a glance at his work produces a jolt of pure optical energy that rivals any to have come out of Action painting. For several years, Georges has been engrossed by Ovid's tale of Diana and Actæon, which tells of the virgin goddess's anger at a young hunter who accidentally sees her bathing naked in the woods. Diana takes her vengeance by shooting the interloper with an arrow that turns him into a stag. On view is a bracingly fresh "Study for 'The Red Diane and Acteon' " (1987-88), as well as two recent narrative variations, the jazzy and near-monochromatic "(Blue) Diane at the Bath" and the kooky, lurid "She Turns Him Into a Stag," whose vengeful goddess suggests a hard-bitten cabaret singer. Among other paintings here are a cheerful, heroic "Aurora," in which the goddess is borne aloft by a dove and holds a crescent moon, and an Amazonian nude on horseback, titled "Hello Calvados," which has some of the unbridled oomph of a Rosa Bonheur. Through Aug. 28. (Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St.)

OTHER VENUES

"Art in the Anchorage"—Creative Time has mounted its ninth annual summer salon in the vaults of the Brooklyn Bridge. On view are six installations, by Helene Aylon, Gretchen Bender, Mildred Howard, Seiko Mikami, the Women's Action Coalition, and Liz Young; a continuous slide presentation of works by photographers Nina Kuo, Dona McAdams, Marilyn Nance, and Lynda Rodolitz; and a memorial exhibition of works by furniture designer and graphic artist Don Ruddy. Several readings, panel discussions, and performances are also scheduled at various times during the run of the show. Through Sept. 20. (Cadman Plaza West at Front St., Brooklyn. Open Thursdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

"Cross Section"—Battery Park City has been transformed into one huge indoor-and-outdoor sculpture park for this show of seventy-five contemporary works, which are on loan from nineteen New York City museums. Among the sixty-five artists represented are Viola Frey, Nam June Paik, Alfredo Jaar, Louise Bourgeois, Christian Marclay, Isamu Noguchi, and Faith Ringgold. Through Sept. 20. (Battery Park City and World Financial Center. Exhibition guides are available at kiosks throughout the area.)

"Putt-Modernism"—An entertaining and provocative eighteen-hole miniature-golf course, in which each hole has been designed by a different artist. Through Sept. 27. (Artists Space, 223 West Broadway. The course is open Thursdays through Saturdays from noon until midnight; Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Sundays from noon until ten.)

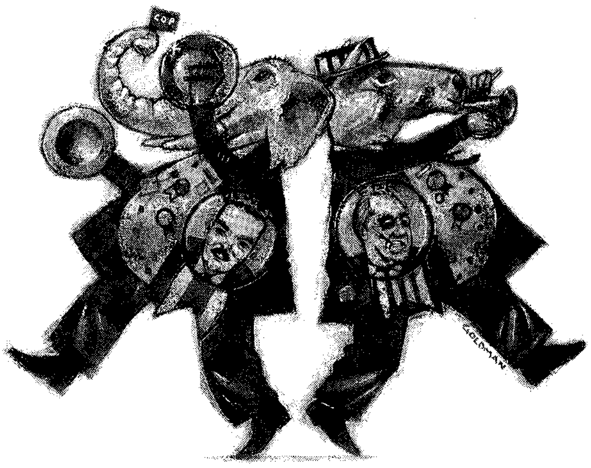
PHOTOGRAPHY

Until last week, when we met Louise Serpa at photographer Bruce Weber's out-of-the-way place, in Montana, we knew nothing and cared nothing about rodeo photography. Now we feel as if we've met someone who has extended what Eadweard Muybridge did with horses in the eighteen-seventies, and with the human form in the eighteen-eighties: in her own way, Serpa has also revolutionized thinking about bodies in motion.

Serpa's life is the stuff of popular biographies. Sixty-six years old, she graduated from Vassar in 1946 and was the first woman photographer to be allowed to take pictures in the professional rodeo arena—you can imagine her account of how she had to prove herself. It's hard to believe your eyes when you first see how wild in form her pictures are—both the horses and the cowboys take on shapes so free from gravity that if you didn't know better you'd think they were made of rubber, or were the products of trick photography. But Serpa's work is anything but tricks. Her rodeo photographs are the result of all her knowledge of her subject, and embody her deep respect for both the animal and the human participants.

Although Serpa has had small shows in the past, and her work has been published (her first cover for *Hoofs and Horns* appeared around 1963), as far as we know there aren't any shows or books on her photography being planned at the present. Too bad. We went through the pile of pictures she had with her over and over again. And her talk—about life, her work, and the way rodeo has changed—held us rapt. It was a whole philosophy of life that we heard, expressed in such advice as "Never don't pay attention."

"The Young Rebel in American Photography, 1950-1970"—A perennial American type is being explored in this smart show. In photography no less than in movies and literature, new images of the rebel seem to arise with every generation, and they exert enormous influence on popular culture. Some of the images here seem innocent by today's standards—such as Bruce Davidson's photographs of a gang of teen-agers whose symbols of rebellion are cigarettes and beer. But there are



"Party Time: Presidential Campaigns Since 1832" at the New-York Historical Society

PHOTOGRAPHY–Cont'd

also tougher pictures, such as Larry Clark's 1971 photographs of kids shooting up, and Diane Arbus's picture of a transvestite sitting on a bed. The other photographers represented are Larry Fink, Robert Frank, Lee Friedlander, William Gale Gedney, Allen Ginsberg, Danny Lyon, and Joseph Sterling. Through Oct. 13. (Museum of Modern Art.)

"An Enduring Interest: The Photographs of Alexander Gardner"—Gardner's many portraits of Abraham Lincoln are endlessly fascinating character studies, and his Civil War photographs—which he published himself, along with the work of several colleagues, in "Gardner's Photographic Sketch Book of the War"—combine fact and emotion so persuasively that he has been called one of the inventors of photojournalism. He took casual as well as formal portraits of Union officers and enlisted men, he photographed Confederate prisoners and wounded soldiers, and he memorialized the dead on the battlefield, who are seen as weighted forms among the rocks and sticks, already part of the earth beneath them. Through Sept. 6. (International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesdays until 8.)

"Recent Celebrity Photography"—Seventy color and black-and-white portraits by such artists as Brigitte Lacombe, Steven Meisel, Matthew Rolston, and Helmut Newton. Through Sept. 6. (American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. Open daily, except Mondays, noon to 4; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 6.)

"Special Collections: The Photographic Order from Pop to Now"—Artists represented include Bernd and Hilla Becher, Annette Messager, Richard Prince, Ed Ruscha, and Dennis Adams. Through Oct. 16. (International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Short List—**todd webb,** Houk Friedman, 1094 Madison Ave., at 82nd St. (closed Mondays, *through Aug. 28*).

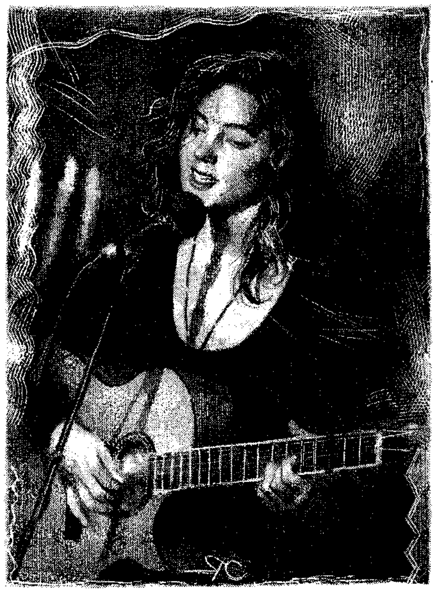
MUSIC

THE other day, we tuned in to classical radio and heard meandering piano music, sweet and consonant and regular but going nowhere. What is this New Age noodling doing here, we wondered, just before the announcer came on. John Cage! We should have known; his death had been reported earlier that day, and the New Age sounds were more than four decades old.

"An American experimental composer," the announcer called him, but we could never really think of Cage as a composer in the traditional sense. It was not his music but his ideas that made an impression; the scores, it still seems to us, don't contain much in the way of music, and the early ones, which contain the most, certainly don't suggest that a great talent ran off the track. The ideas behind the pieces that made his fame are easy to recall; remembering how they sounded is not so easy. Four minutes and thirty-three seconds of silence; pianos played anywhere but on the keyboard; notes selected at random or by consulting the I Ching or by having orchestra members look at drawings and play whatever came into their heads. . . . The last Cage pieces to have been played in New York were his "Europeras," mishmashes of recorded excerpts from old operas.

But Cage could also be a poetic thinker, and the questions he asked, directly and indirectly, could be stunning. And he was a pioneer of the artist as self-imager—the personality as career. Though infinitely more restrained, he was a predecessor of, say, Madonna: the medium is music but the art lies somewhere else.

Cage was a gentle spirit—an elfin presence despite his height—whose eyes twinkled and who spoke, softly, in ellipses. The one thing everybody knew about him, beyond the quirkiness of his works, was that he hunted for rare mushrooms. Fellow-composers loved him and honored his ideas. For many of his own generation and the next, his free thinking liberated thought. His productions were not so much music as proposals, speculative environments into which music might be introduced, spores that might germinate into something musical if the wind should carry them to the right soil. A suitable epitaph might be: He composed music in others minds.



Sarah McLachlan

OPERA

New York City Opera—**la bohème,** with Gwynne Geyer, Nina Warren, Robert Brubaker, and Eugene Perry; conducted by Mark Gibson. (Aug. 25 at 8 and Aug. 30 at 1:30.). . . **rigoletto,** with Sheryl Woods, Martin Thompson, and Sigmund Cowan; Joseph Colaneri. (Aug. 26 at 8 and Aug. 29 at 1:30.). . . **il barbiere di siviglia,** with Kathryn Gamberoni, Paul Austin Kelly, Robert Orth, and Jan Opalach; Scott Bergeson. (Aug. 28 and Sept. 2 at 8.). . . **turandot,** with Catherine Kelly, Eva Zseller, Vincenzo Scuderi, and Harry Dworchak; Steven Sloane. (Aug. 29 at 8.). . . With Ealynn Voss, Christiane Riel, Antonio Barasorda, and Philip Cokorinos; Steven Sloane. (Sept. 1 at 8.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

CONCERTS

New Amsterdam Symphony Orchestra—Scott Jackson Wiley conducts Delius' "Two Pieces for Small Orchestra" and Haydn's Symphony No. 83 ("La Poule"), and Christine Diwyk is featured in Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 2. (St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 346 W. 20th St. Aug. 27 at 7:30. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

Bargemusic—Pianist Christopher O'Riley performs Rameau's A-Major Harpsichord Suite, and cellist Carter Brey joins him for sonatas by Prokofiev and Rachmaninoff. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. Aug. 27-28 at 7:30, and Aug. 30 at 4.)

Summergarden at MOMA—The Museum's nine-weekend-long series devoted to works by John Cage had been intended as a prelude to the composer's eightieth birthday, which would fall on September 5. Following Cage's recent death, this final pair of concerts will serve instead as a memorial, in which Juilliard students and recent graduates will twice perform his "Ten" (written last year), as well as a 1985 work whose ample title suggests the composer's occasionally Dadaist inclinations: "But What About the Noise of Crumpling Paper Which He Used to Do in Order to Paint the Series of 'Papiers Froissés' or Tearing Up Paper to Make 'Papiers Déchirés?' Arp Was Stimulated by Water (Sea, Lake, and Flowing Waters Like Rivers), Forests." (Sculpture Garden, Museum of Modern Art, 14 W. 54th St. Aug. 28-29 at 7:30. No tickets necessary.)

Teatime Tunes—As Sunday afternoon turns into evening, the folks who run the Hotel Wales are wont to offer hour-long chamber-music concerts in their second-floor salon. This installment is all-American, including folk songs (in arrangements by Copland and John Jacob Niles, sung by tenor Jim Blanton), a composition by Johann Martin Friedrichsen (a nineteenth-century immigrant from Denmark), and works by Ulysses Kay, George Rochberg, and Alan Hovhaness (performed by oboist Jeffrey Hale, English-horn player John Frisch, and bassoonist Robert Price). (Madison Ave. at 92nd St. Aug. 30 at 6. No tickets necessary.)

Alejandro Mendoza and Mitsuko Ichimura—The violinist and the pianist will perform sonatas by Mozart, Beethoven (his Seventh), and Saint-Saëns (his First), as well as Sarasate's "Carmen Fantasy." (Steinway Hall, 109 W. 57th St. Aug. 30 at 6:30. No tickets necessary.)

JAZZ/POP/ROCK
PERSONAL APPEARANCES

The Black Crowes—This Georgia band drives critics crazy with its shameless musical and visual swipes from early-seventies Rolling Stones, Faces, and Allman Brothers. It doesn't help that the two brothers running the show, singer Chris Robinson and lead guitarist Rich, are anything but the Glimmer Twins when it comes to songwriting talent. But Keith Richards blues-rock guitar riffs and Mick-and-Rod mike-twirling attitude more than make up for a lack of memorable songs, at least in the eyes of the band's loyalists. The group's second album, "The Southern Harmony and Musical Companion," entered the charts this spring at No. 1, and this tour is doing very well indeed. Here's hoping that somewhere along the line the Crowes create something worthy of their models. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Aug. 24-27 at 8.)

k. d. lang—She's so much more than a butch pinup with an aversion to meat. She's also soft, witty, and, despite her constant claims that she doesn't read, extremely literate. In lang's forthcoming video, "Miss Chatelaine," public image catches up to personal fact: she plays a bouffanted, forties-era femme fatale with a figure that only viewers of her Percy Adlon movie "salmonberries" (*still* unreleased in the U.S.) will fully recognize. She'll ditch the dress and heels for this concert, though, just as she's left country music for the land of her true foremothers: Joni, the Judys, Dionne, Peggy Lee. Her beautifully paced two-hour set starts out with selections from her latest album, "Ingenue," before moving into Orbison/Presley territory—all interpreted by the richest voice in popular music. When asked once where that voice came from, she said, "God—the boring answer." (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. Aug. 26-27 at 8.)

Sarah McLachlan—A relative newcomer to the alternative-music scene, McLachlan possesses such a pure, expressionistic voice that she never needs to showboat. On her new album, "Solace," her strong, easy-paced melodies and compassionate lyrics combined to make some sweetly seductive music. While she acknowledges influences ranging from Joni Mitchell to Kate Bush, McLachlan manages to stand on her own—a terrific new singer and songwriter. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Aug. 27 at 8.)

U2—In interviews, the band members seem to have agreed on "irony" as the new key ingredient, and lead singer Bono has covered himself with shiny black leather and discovered a sleazy, sardonic, less pretentious persona to fit his role as master of ceremonies at a decadent rave party celebrating media overload. Ironically, the thick conceptual incrustation of Zoo TV, as the tour is called, has lightened U2's baggage. Surrounded by visual noise, they're soaring like the great rock band they are. (Yankee Stadium. Aug. 29-30 at 8. For tickets, call 307-7171.)

New York Rock and Soul Revue—Donald Fagen, Walter Becker, Michael McDonald, Boz Scaggs, Phoebe Snow, and Chuck Jackson. (Jones Beach Theatre. 1-516 221-1000. Aug. 24 at 8.)

Bonnie Raitt/Lyle Lovett—Jones Beach Theatre. Aug. 26-27 at 8.

The Beach Boys—With David Cassidy. (Jones Beach Theatre. Aug. 28-29 at 8.)

Liza Minnelli—Jones Beach Theatre. Aug. 30 at 8. (Rain date, Aug. 31.)

Allman Brothers Band—Meadowlands Summerfest. 1-201 935-3900. Aug. 30 at 8.

Reba McEntire/Vince Gill—Jones Beach Theatre. Sept. 1 at 8.

Blues Festival—Ray Charles, B. B. King, Buddy Guy, Dr. John, and the Fabulous Thunderbirds. (Jones Beach Theatre. Sept. 2 at 6:30.)

Delacorte Theatre—Aug. 24 at 8: Toots and the Maytals. . . . ¶ Aug. 31 at 8: Elizabeth Swados and Simon Shaheen. (Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 861-7277.)

Riverside Park Arts Festival—Aug. 29 at 4: A Charlie Parker celebration, with Charles McPherson, Red Rodney, Barry Harris, Ray Drummond, and Ben Riley. (Rotunda, W. 79th St. near the Boat Basin. No tickets necessary.)

SPORTS

HOME TEAMS

Yankees—Vs. the Milwaukee Brewers, Aug. 24-26 at 7:30.

Mets—Vs. the Cincinnati Reds, Aug. 28 at 5:10 (a doubleheader), Aug. 29 at 1:05, and Aug. 30 at 8:05. . . . ¶ Vs. the Atlanta Braves, Aug. 31 at 5:10 (a doubleheader), Sept. 1 at 7:40, and Sept. 2 at 1:40.

(The Yankees play at Yankee Stadium, 1-718 293-6000; and the Mets play at Shea Stadium, 1-718 507-8499.)

RACING

Horses—At Saratoga Springs: Daily, except Tuesdays, at 1. Through Aug. 31. . . . At Monmouth Park, Oceanport, N.J.: Daily, except Mondays and Thursdays, at 1:05. Through Sept. 6. . . . At Atlantic City Race Course: Tuesdays through Saturdays at 7:25. Through Sept. 5. . . . **trotting** at Yonkers Raceway: Mondays through Saturdays at 8 and Tuesdays at 1; Sundays at 6:45. . . . At Saratoga Raceway, Saratoga Springs: Weeknights at 7:45.

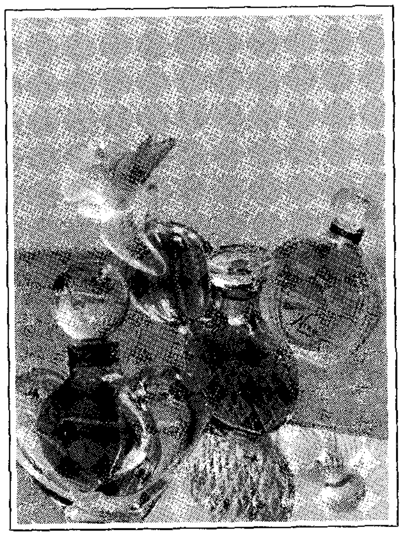
CHAMPIONSHIP—TENNIS

U. S. Open—The best players in the world will be on the courts at the U.S.T.A. National Tennis Center in Flushing Meadow, starting Aug. 31 and running through Sept. 13.

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Summer Pastime—Coney Island will be the site of a sand-sculpting contest, starting at 10 A.M. on Aug. 29. Bring a shovel and pail to Deno's Wonder Wheel, and, if you're among the first five hundred participants, expect a free Frisbee. (For further information, call 1-718 266-4653.)

"Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors"—Final performances—Aug. 25 at 6:30: Teatro Guirigai, a company from Spain, performs "The Umpteenth Trip to El Dorado.". . . ¶ Aug. 26 at 6:30: Teatro Guirigai. . . . ¶ Aug. 27 at 5:30: Marta Renzi and the Project Company. . . . At 8:15: Aster Aweke and Zulu Spear. . . . ¶ Aug. 28 at 5: The Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre presents "Mambo Louie and the Dance Machine.". . . At 6:30: Nishat Khan, a sitar player. . . . ¶ Aug. 29 at 4: Soh Daiko. . . . At 5:10: The Gospel Pearls of Washington, D.C. . . . At 6:20: Kimberly McCarver. . . . At 7:30: Schooner Fare. . . . At 8:40: Doc Watson. . . . ¶ Aug. 30 at 4: The Del McCoury Band. . . . At 5:10: Loudon Wainwright. . . . At 6:20: Carrie Smith. . . . At 7:30: Pete Seeger and the Coalition of Community Choruses. . . . At 8:40: Taj Mahal.



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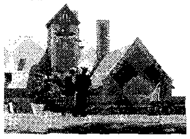

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE MOVIE HOUSES

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	1	2			

FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN THE "IN BRIEF" SECTION, STARTING ON PAGE 22.

EAST SIDE

ANGELIKA FILM CENTER, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000)
Theatre 1: "Enchanted April" (†).
Theatre 2: "Light Sleeper" (directed by Paul Schrader), with Willem Dafoe and Susan Sarandon.
Theatre 3: "The Living End" (Gregg Araki).
Theatre 4: "Johnny Suede" (Tom DiCillo), with Brad Pitt and Catherine Keener.
Theatre 5: "Night on Earth" (†).
Theatre 6: "Delicatessen" (Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro, in French).

LITTLE THEATRE, Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)
Through Aug. 27: "Wax or the Discovery of Television Among the Bees" (1991, David Blair).
From Aug. 28: "Oh Boris" (1990, Niki List; in German); and "Limite" (1931, Mario Peixoto; a Brazilian silent film).

NEWMAN THEATRE, Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)
Through Aug. 30: (Separate admission) "The Night of the Hunter" (1955, Charles Laughton), with Robert Mitchum, Shelley Winters, and Lillian Gish; and "Blue Velvet" (1986, David Lynch), with Kyle MacLachlan, Isabella Rossellini, Dennis Hopper, Laura Dern, and Dean Stockwell.
From Aug. 31: Theatre closed.

MOVIELAND 8TH STREET TRIPLEX, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)
Theatre 1: "Rapid Fire" (Dwight H. Little), with Brandon Lee.
Theatre 2: "Unforgiven" (†).
Theatre 3: "Christopher Columbus: The Discovery" (John Glen), with George Corraface.

VILLAGE THEATRE VII, 3rd Ave. at 11th. (982-0400)
Theatre 1: "Diggstown" (Michael Ritchie), with James Woods, Louis Gossett, Jr., and Bruce Dern.
Theatre 2: "Single White Female" (†).
Theatre 3: "A League of Their Own" (†).
Theatre 4: Through Aug. 27: "Stay Tuned" (Peter Hyams), with John Ritter and Pam Dawber. From Aug. 28: "Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me" (David Lynch), with Kyle MacLachlan, Sheryl Lee, and Roy Wise.
Theatre 5: "Single White Female" (†).
Theatre 6: "One False Move" (†).
Theatre 7: "Little Nemo: Adventures in Slumberland" (William T. Hurtz), an animated film.

VILLAGE EAST CINEMAS, 2nd Ave. at 12th. (529-6799)
Theatre 1: "Sister Act" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Player" (†).
Theatre 3: "London Kills Me" (Hanif Kureishi), with Justin Chadwick.
Theatre 4: (Matinées only) "Honey, I Blew Up the Kid" (Randal Kleiser), with Rick Moranis and Marcia Strassman; and (evenings only) "Mo' Money" (Peter Macdonald), with Damon Wayans.
Theatre 5: "The Hairdresser's Husband" (Patrice Leconte, in French).
Theatre 6: "A Stranger Among Us" (†).
Theatre 7: "3 Ninjas" (Jon Turteltaub), with Victor Wong.

19TH STREET EAST 6, B'way at 19th. (260-8000)
Theatre 1: "Batman Returns" (†).
Theatre 2: "Patriot Games" (†).
Theatre 3: Aug. 24: "Boomerang" (†). Aug. 25-27: Theatre closed. From Aug. 28: "Pet Sematary Two" (Mary Lambert), with Edward Furlong, Anthony Edwards, Clancy Brown, and Jared Rushton.
Theatre 4: Through Aug. 27: "Whispers in the Dark" (†). From Aug. 28: "Honeymoon in Vegas" (Andrew Bergman), with James Caan, Nicolas Cage, and Sarah Jessica Parker.
Theatre 5: "Christopher Columbus: The Discovery" (John Glen), with George Corraface.
Theatre 6: "Unforgiven" (†).

GRAMERCY, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)
"Clearcut" (Richard Bugajski), with Graham Greene.

BAY CINEMA, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)
"Single White Female" (†).

MURRAY HILL CINEMAS, 160 E. 34th. (689-6548)
Theatre 1: (Matinées only) "3 Ninjas" (Jon Turteltaub), with Victor Wong; and (evenings only) "A Stranger Among Us" (†).
Theatre 2: "Raising Cain" (†).
Theatre 3: "Diggstown" (Michael Ritchie), with James Woods, Louis Gossett, Jr., and Bruce Dern.
Theatre 4: "Rapid Fire" (Dwight H. Little), with Brandon Lee.

34TH STREET SHOWPLACE, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 27: "Whispers in the Dark" (†). From Aug. 28: "Honeymoon in Vegas" (Andrew Bergman), with James Caan, Nicolas Cage, and Sarah Jessica Parker.
Theatre 2: "Unforgiven" (†).
Theatre 3: Through Aug. 27: "Mo' Money" (Peter Macdonald), with Damon Wayans. From Aug. 28: "Pet Sematary Two" (Mary Lambert), with Edward Furlong, Anthony Edwards, Clancy Brown, and Jared Rushton.

34TH ST. EAST, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)
"Death Becomes Her" (†).

EASTSIDE CINEMA, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)
"The Ox" (Sven Nykvist, in Swedish).

SUTTON I AND 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)
Theatre 1: "The Hairdresser's Husband" (Patrice Leconte, in French).
Theatre 2: "One False Move" (†).

GOTHAM CINEMA, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)
Through Aug. 25: "Unlawful Entry" (†).
From Aug. 26: "Storyville" (Mark Frost), with James Spader, Joanne Whalley-Kilmer, and Jason Robards.

PLAZA, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)
"Raise the Red Lantern" (Zhang Yimou; in Chinese).

MANHATTAN TWIN, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)
Theatre 1: "Rapid Fire" (Dwight H. Little), with Brandon Lee.
Theatre 2: "Rapid Fire."

59TH STREET EAST CINEMA, 239 E. 59th. (759-4630)
(Matinées only) "Honey, I Blew Up the Kid" (Randal Kleiser), with Rick Moranis and Marcia Strassman; and (evenings only) "Boomerang" (†).

BARONET AND CORONET, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)
Theatre 1: "Mo' Money" (Peter Macdonald), with Damon Wayans.
Theatre 2: Through Aug. 27: "Death Becomes Her" (†). From Aug. 28: "Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me" (David Lynch), with Kyle MacLachlan, Sheryl Lee, and Roy Wise.

CINEMA I, CINEMA II, AND CINEMA 3RD AVENUE, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)
Theatre 1: "A Stranger Among Us" (†).
Theatre 2: "Enchanted April" (†).
Theatre 3: "Sister Act" (†).

ART EAST CINEMA, 1st Ave. at 61st. (644-1111)
Through Aug. 27: "Mediterraneo" (Gabriele Salvatores, in Italian).
From Aug. 28: To be announced.

FIRST & 62ND CINEMAS, 400 E. 62nd. (752-4600)
Theatre 1: "Raising Cain" (†).
Theatre 2: (Matinées only) "Little Nemo: Adventures in Slumberland" (William T. Hurtz), an animated film; and (evenings only) "The Player" (†).
Theatre 3: "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" (Fran Rubel Kuzui), with Kristy Swanson, Donald Sutherland, Paul Reubens, Rutger Hauer, and Luke Perry.
Theatre 4: "Raising Cain" (†).
Theatre 5: "Diggstown" (Michael Ritchie), with James Woods, Louis Gossett, Jr., and Bruce Dern.
Theatre 6: "Diggstown."

GEMINI I AND 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)
Theatre 1: "Stay Tuned" (Peter Hyams), with John Ritter and Pam Dawber.
Theatre 2: "Christopher Columbus: The Discovery" (John Glen), with George Corraface.

BEEKMAN, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)
"Single White Female" (†).

NEW YORK TWIN, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 27: "Whispers in the Dark" (†). From Aug. 28: "Pet Sematary Two" (Mary Lambert), with Edward Furlong, Anthony Edwards, Clancy Brown, and Jared Rushton.
Theatre 2: Through Aug. 27: "Unforgiven" (†). From Aug. 28: "Honeymoon in Vegas" (Andrew Bergman), with James Caan, Nicolas Cage, and Sarah Jessica Parker.

68TH ST. PLAYHOUSE, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)
"Light Sleeper" (Paul Schrader), with Willem Dafoe and Susan Sarandon.

TOWER EAST, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)
"A League of Their Own" (†).

EAST 85TH STREET, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)
(Matinées only) "Bebe's Kids" (Bruce Smith), an animated film; and (evenings only) "Mo' Money" (Peter Macdonald), with Damon Wayans.

PARK & 86TH STREET CINEMAS, 125 E. 86th. (534-1880)
Theatre 1: "Rapid Fire" (Dwight H. Little), with Brandon Lee.
Theatre 2: Through Aug. 27: "Death Becomes Her" (†). From Aug. 28: "Honeymoon in Vegas" (Andrew Bergman), with James Caan, Nicolas Cage, and Sarah Jessica Parker.

ORPHEUM VII, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (876-2400)
Theatre 1: "Single White Female" (†).
Theatre 2: "Single White Female" (†).
Theatre 3: "Whispers in the Dark" (†).
Theatre 4: "Christopher Columbus: The Discovery" (John Glen), with George Corraface.
Theatre 5: Through Aug. 27: "Stay Tuned" (Peter Hyams), with John Ritter and Pam Dawber. From Aug. 28: "Pet Sematary Two" (Mary Lambert), with Edward Furlong, Anthony Edwards, Clancy Brown, and Jared Rushton.
Theatre 6: "Diggstown" (Michael Ritchie), with James Woods, Louis Gossett, Jr., and Bruce Dern.
Theatre 7: "Unforgiven" (†).

86TH STREET EAST TWIN, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)
Theatre 1: (Matinées only) "Little Nemo: Adventures in Slumberland" (William T. Hurtz), an animated film; and (evenings only) "Raising Cain" (†).
Theatre 2: (Matinées only) "3 Ninjas" (Jon Turteltaub), with Victor Wong; and (evenings only) "A Stranger Among Us" (†).

WEST SIDE

FILM FORUM, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 25: "Cup Final" (directed by Eran Riklis, in English, Arabic, and Hebrew), with Moshe Ivgi and Muhamad Bacri. From Aug. 26: "Wild Wheels" (Harrod Blank), a documentary.
Theatre 2: See listings under Revival Houses.
Theatre 3: "Gas Food Lodging" (Allison Anders).

WAVERLY I AND 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 25: "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" (Fran Rubel Kuzui), with Kristy Swanson, Donald Sutherland, Paul Reubens, Rutger Hauer, and Luke Perry. From Aug. 26: "Laws of Gravity" (Nick Gomez).
Theatre 2: "Raising Cain" (†).

ART GREENWICH TWIN, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 27: "Death Becomes Her" (†). From Aug. 28: "Honeymoon in Vegas" (Andrew Bergman), with James Caan, Nicolas Cage, and Sarah Jessica Parker.
Theatre 2: "Whispers in the Dark" (†).

QUAD CINEMA, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 27: "Zentropa" (Lars Von Trier, in English and German). From Aug. 28: "A Tale of Springtime" (Eric Rohmer, in French).
Theatre 2: "The Best Intentions" (†).
Theatre 3: "Raise the Red Lantern" (Zhang Yimou; in Chinese); and "Europa Europa" (Agnieszka Holland, in German and Russian).
Theatre 4: "The Ox" (Sven Nykvist, in Swedish).

CHELSEA CINEMAS, 260 W. 23rd. (691-4744)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 27: (Matinées only) "Little Nemo: Adventures in Slumberland" (William T. Hurtz), an animated film; and (evenings only) "Mo' Money" (Peter Macdonald), with Damon Wayans. From Aug. 28: "Honeymoon in Vegas" (Andrew Bergman), with James Caan, Nicolas Cage, and Sarah Jessica Parker.
Theatre 2: "Raising Cain" (†).
Theatre 3: "Death Becomes Her" (†).
Theatre 4: "Diggstown" (Michael Ritchie), with James Woods, Louis Gossett, Jr., and Bruce Dern.
Theatre 5: "A League of Their Own" (†).
Theatre 6: Through Aug. 27: "Stay Tuned" (Peter Hyams), with John Ritter and Pam

Dawber. From Aug. 28: "Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me" (David Lynch), with Kyle MacLachlan, Sheryl Lee, and Roy Wise.

Theatre 7: "Single White Female" (†).

Theatre 8: "Raising Cain" (†).

Theatre 9: "Single White Female" (†).

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)

Theatre 1: "Rapid Fire" (Dwight H. Little), with Brandon Lee.

Theatre 2: "3 Ninjas" (Jon Turteltaub), with Victor Wong.

Theatre 3: "Rapid Fire."

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)

"3 Ninjas" (Jon Turteltaub), with Victor Wong.

Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583)

Theatre 1: "Single White Female" (†).

Theatre 2: "Sister Act" (†).

Theatre 3: "A League of Their Own" (†).

Theatre 4: (Matinées only) "Little Nemo: Adventures in Slumberland" (William T. Hurtz), an animated film; and (evenings only) "Patriot Games" (†).

Theatre 5: "Raising Cain" (†).

Theatre 6: (Matinées only) "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" (Fran Rubel Kuzui), with Kristy Swanson, Donald Sutherland, Paul Reubens, Rutger Hauer, and Luke Perry; and (evenings only) "Unlawful Entry" (†).

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)

"Death Becomes Her" (†).

Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)

"Patriot Games" (†).

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)

"Mistress" (Barry Primus), with Robert Wuhl.

Carnegie Hall Cinemas, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)

Theatre 1: "Prelude to a Kiss" (†).

Theatre 2: "The Best Intentions" (†).

Fine Arts, 4 W. 58th. (980-5656)

"Howards End" (†).

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)

"The Player" (†).

Columbus Circle, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)

"A Stranger Among Us" (†).

62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd. (265-7466)

Through Aug. 27: "A League of Their Own" (†).

From Aug. 28: "Honeymoon in Vegas" (Andrew Bergman), with James Caan, Nicolas Cage, and Sarah Jessica Parker.

Lincoln Plaza 1, 2, and 3, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)

Theatre 1: "La Discrète" (Christian Vincent; in French).

Theatre 2: "A Brief History of Time" (Errol Morris), a documentary.

Theatre 3: Through Aug. 27: "A Tale of Springtime" (Eric Rohmer, in French). From Aug. 28: "Danzon" (Maria Novaro, in Spanish).

Regency, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)

"Death Becomes Her" (†).

84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)

Theatre 1: Through Aug. 27: "Stay Tuned" (Peter Hyams), with John Ritter and Pam Dawber. From Aug. 28: "Pet Sematary Two" (Mary Lambert), with Edward Furlong, Anthony Edwards, Clancy Brown, and Jared Rushton.

Theatre 2: "Single White Female" (†).

Theatre 3: "Light Sleeper" (Paul Schrader), with Willem Dafoe and Susan Sarandon.

Theatre 4: "Christopher Columbus: The Discovery" (John Glen), with George Corraface.

Theatre 5: "Unforgiven" (†).

Theatre 6: "Whispers in the Dark" (†).

Metro Cinema 1 and 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)

Theatre 1: Through Aug. 27: "Diggstown" (Michael Ritchie), with James Woods, Louis Gossett, Jr., and Bruce Dern. From Aug. 28: "Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me" (David Lynch), with Kyle MacLachlan, Sheryl Lee, and Roy Wise.

Theatre 2: "Raising Cain" (†).

Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)

Theatre 1: "3 Ninjas" (Jon Turteltaub), with Victor Wong.

Theatre 2: "Rapid Fire" (Dwight H. Little), with Brandon Lee.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)

Theatre 1: "Christopher Columbus: The Discovery" (directed by John Glen), with George Corraface.

Theatre 2: "Universal Soldier" (Roland Emmerich), with Jean-Claude Van Damme and Dolph Lundgren.

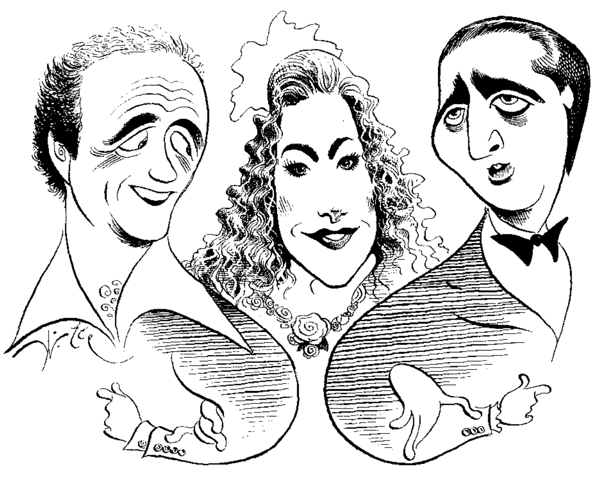
Theatre 3: "Stay Tuned" (Peter Hyams), with John Ritter, Pam Dawber, Jeffrey Jones, and Eugene Levy.

Theatre 4: "Batman Returns" (†).

Theatre 5: "Unforgiven" (†).

Theatre 6: "Diggstown" (Michael Ritchie), with James Woods, Louis Gossett, Jr., and Bruce Dern.

Theatre 7: "Rapid Fire" (Dwight H. Little), with Brandon Lee.



James Caan, Sarah Jessica Parker, and Nicolas Cage in "Honeymoon in Vegas"

Embassy 1, B'way at 46th. (302-0494)

Through Aug. 27: "Whispers in the Dark" (†). From Aug. 28: "Honeymoon in Vegas" (Andrew Bergman), with James Caan, Nicolas Cage, and Sarah Jessica Parker.

Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)

Theatre 1: "Bebe's Kids" (Bruce Smith), an animated film.

Theatre 2: "Boomerang" (†).

Theatre 3: "Honey, I Blew Up the Kid" (Randal Kleiser), with Rick Moranis and Marcia Strassman.

Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)

Through Aug. 27: "Mo' Money" (Peter Macdonald), with Damon Wayans.

From Aug. 28: "Pet Sematary Two" (Mary Lambert), with Edward Furlong, Anthony Edwards, Clancy Brown, and Jared Rushton.

National Twin, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)

Theatre 1: Through Aug. 27: "Single White Female" (†). From Aug. 28: "Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me" (David Lynch), with Kyle MacLachlan.

Theatre 2: "Raising Cain" (†).

REVIVAL HOUSES

Le Cinematographe, 15 Vandam St. (675-4680)

Through Aug. 25: "I Bury the Living" (1957, directed by Albert Band), with Richard Boone and Theodore Bikel; and "Nightmare" (1956, Maxwell Shane), with Edward G. Robinson and Kevin McCarthy.

Aug. 26-27: "The Long Goodbye" (1973, Robert Altman), with Elliott Gould; and "California Split" (1974, Altman), with Gould and George Segal.

Aug. 28-29: "A Woman Under the Influence" (1974, John Cassavetes), with Peter Falk and Gena Rowlands.

Aug. 30: "Faces" (1968, John Cassavetes), with John Marley, Gena Rowlands, Lynn Carlin, and Seymour Cassel.

Aug. 31-Sept. 1: "The Killing of a Chinese Bookie" (1976, John Cassavetes), with Ben Gazzara.

Sept. 2: "Shadows" (1961, John Cassavetes).

8th St. Playhouse, 52 W. 8th. (674-6515)

Through Aug. 25: "Pinocchio" (1940), a Walt Disney full-length cartoon; and "Cyrano de Bergerac" (1990, Jean-Paul Rappeneau; in French), with Gérard Depardieu.

Aug. 26-Sept. 1: "Via Appia" (Jochen Hick).

From Sept. 2: "La Dolce Vita" (1960, Federico Fellini; in Italian), with Marcello Mastroianni and Anita Ekberg.

Film Forum 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)

Aug. 24: "Aelita" (1924, Yakov Protazanov; a Russian silent film); and "She" (1935, Irving Pichel and Lansing C. Holden), with Randolph Scott.

Aug. 25: "The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms" (1953, Eugène Lourié), with Paula Raymond and Paul Christian; and "Gorgo" (1961, Eugène Lourié), with Bill Travers.

Aug. 26: "Hangover Square" (1945, John Brahm), with Laird Cregar and Linda Darnell; and "The Undying Monster" (1942, Brahm), with James Ellison.

Aug. 27-28: "Diabolique" (1955, Henri-Georges Clouzot; in French), with Simone Signoret, Vera Clouzot, and Paul Meurisse; and "Eyes Without a Face" (1959, Georges Franju; in French), with Pierre Brasseur.

Aug. 29-31: "Invaders from Mars" (see page 25); and "The 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T." (1953, Roy Rowland), with Peter Lind Hayes, Mary Healy, Hans Conried, and Tommy Rettig.

Sept. 1-2: "Deluge" (1933, Felix E. Feist); and "Chandu the Magician" (1932, William Cameron Menzies and Marcel Varnel), with Bela Lugosi and Edmund Lowe.

Theatre 80 St. Marks, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)

Aug. 24: "Vampyr" (1932, Carl Dreyer, in German), with Julian West, Henriette Gérard, Rena Mandel, and Sybille Schmitz; and "Day of Wrath" (1943, Dreyer; in Danish), with Lisbeth Movin and Anna Svierkier.

Aug. 25: "Dr. No" (1963, Terence Young), with Sean Connery, Ursula Andress, and Joseph Wiseman; and "Thunderball" (1965, Young), with Connery, Adolfo Celi, Claudine Auger, and Luciana Paluzzi.

Aug. 26: "Walkabout" (1971, Nicolas Roeg); and "Picnic at Hanging Rock" (1975, Peter Weir), with Rachel Roberts.

Aug. 27: "Trouble in Paradise" (1932, Ernst Lubitsch), with Kay Francis, Herbert Marshall, Miriam Hopkins, and Edward Everett Horton; and "Private Lives" (1931, Sidney Franklin), with Norma Shearer, Robert Montgomery, and Reginald Denny.

Aug. 28-29: "Annie Hall" (1977, Woody Allen), with Allen and Diane Keaton; and "Manhattan" (1979, Allen), with Allen, Keaton, Michael Murphy, and Meryl Streep.

Aug. 30: "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" (1966, Mike Nichols), with Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, George Segal, and Sandy Dennis; and "Butterfield 8" (1960, Daniel Mann), with Taylor, Laurence Harvey, Eddie Fisher, and Dina Merrill.

Aug. 31: "Sandra" (1966, Visconti; in Italian), with Claudia Cardinale and Michael Craig; and "Senso" (1955, Luchino Visconti; in Italian), with Farley Granger and Alida Valli.

Sept. 1: "Animal Crackers" (1930, Victor Herrman) and "Duck Soup" (1933, Leo McCarey), both with the Marx Brothers.

Sept. 2: "Nightmare Alley" (1947, Edmund Goulding), with Tyrone Power, Joan Blondell, and Coleen Gray; and "The Razor's Edge" (1946, Goulding), with Gene Tierney, Power, Anne Baxter, Herbert Marshall, and Clifton Webb.

Tribeca Cinema, 41 White St. (925-2570)

Through Aug. 25: "Seconds" (1966, John Frankenheimer), with Rock Hudson, Salome Jens, and John Randolph; and "Scarlet Street" (1946, Fritz Lang), with Joan Bennett, Edward G. Robinson, and Dan Duryea.

Aug. 26-27: "The Golden Coach" (1953, Jean Renoir), with Anna Magnani; and "The Cranes Are Flying" (1957, Mikhail Kalatozov; in Russian).

Aug. 28-29: "Knife in the Water" (1962, Roman Polanski; in Polish); and "The Gold of Naples" (1957, Vittorio De Sica; in Italian), with Sophia Loren, De Sica, Silvana Magnano, and Totò.

Aug. 30: "Children of Paradise" (1945, Marcel Carné; in French), with Jean-Louis Barrault, Arletty, Pierre Brasseur, Louis Salou, Marcel Herrand, Pierre Renoir, and Maria Casarès.

Aug. 31-Sept. 1: "Traffic" (1971, Jacques Tati); and "Mr. Hulot's Holiday" (1953, Jacques Tati).

From Sept. 2: "Some Like It Hot" (1959, Billy Wilder), with Marilyn Monroe, Tony Curtis, and Jack Lemmon; and "Memories of Me" (1988, Henry Winkler), with Billy Crystal, Alan King, and JoBeth Williams.

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Aug. 24 at noon and Aug. 25 at 3: "A Special Day" (1977, directed by Ettore Scola; in Italian), with Sophia Loren and Marcello Mastroianni. . . . ¶ Aug. 24 at 2:30: "Kanal"

MOVIE HOUSES–Cont'd

(1957, Andrzej Wajda; in Polish). . . . ¶ Aug. 24 at 6: "Kagemusha" ("The Shadow Warrior"; 1980, Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese), with Tatsuya Nakadai. . . . ¶ Aug. 25 at noon: "Raven's End" (1964, Bo Widerberg; in Swedish). . . . ¶ Aug. 25 at 6 and Aug. 30 at noon: "Strongman Ferdinand" (1975, Alexander Kluge; in German). . . . ¶ Aug. 27 at noon and Aug. 29 at 2: "Freeze, Die, Come to Life" (1989, Vitali Kanevski; in Russian). . . . ¶ Aug. 27 at 3: "The Roof" (1956, Vittorio De Sica; in Italian). . . . ¶ Aug. 27 at 6 and Aug. 28 at 1: "The Mother and the Whore" (1973, Jean Eustache; in French), with Jean-Pierre Léaud, Bernadette Lafont, and Françoise Lebrun. . . . ¶ Aug. 28 at 6: "Mr. Klein" (1977, Joseph Losey; in French), with Alain Delon, Jeanne Moreau, and Michel Lonsdale. . . . ¶ Aug. 29 at noon and Aug. 30 at 2: "Wednesday's Child" (†). . . . ¶ Aug. 29 at 5 and Aug. 31 at 4: "My Night at Maud's" (1970, Eric Rohmer; in French), with Jean-Louis Trintignant. . . . ¶ Aug. 30 at 5 and Aug. 31 at noon: "Andrei Roublev" (1965, Andrei Tarkovsky; in Russian), with Anatoliy Solonitsyn. . . . ¶ Aug. 31 at 6: "The Fiancées" (1963, Ermanno Olmi; in Italian). . . . ¶ Sept. 1 at noon: "Brightness" (1987, Souleymane Cissé; a Malian film, in Bambara). . . . ¶ Sept. 1 at 3: "One Day Like Another" (1980, Mrinal Sen; in Bengali). . . . ¶ Sept. 1 at 6: "Loulou" (1980, Maurice Pialat; in French), with Isabelle Huppert, Gérard Depardieu, and Guy Marchand.

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. (875-5600)—Aug. 24 at 2, 5, and 8:30: "Hands Across the Table" (1935, Mitchell Leisen), with Carole Lombard, Fred MacMurray, Ralph Bellamy, and Astrid Allwyn. . . . ¶ Aug. 24 at 3:30: "Nothing Sacred" (1937, William Wellman), with Lombard, Fredric March, Walter Connolly, and Charles Winninger. . . . ¶ Aug. 24 at 6:45 and 10: "The Princess Comes Across" (1936, William K. Howard), with Lombard, MacMurray, and Alison Skipworth. . . . ¶ Aug. 25 at 2, 5:30, and 9: "They Knew What They Wanted" (1940, Garson Kanin), with Lombard and Charles Laughton. . . . ¶ Aug. 25 at 3:45 and 7:15: "True Confession" (1937, Wesley Ruggles), with Lombard, John Barrymore, and MacMurray. . . . ¶ Aug. 26 at 2, 5:30, and 8:45: "Brief Moment" (1933, David Burton),with Lombard and Gene Raymond. . . . ¶ Aug. 26 at 3:30, 7, and 10:15: "Mr. and Mrs. Smith" (1941, Alfred Hitchcock), with Lombard, Robert Montgomery, and Raymond. . . . ¶ Aug. 27 at 2, 5, and 8: "Fools for Scandal" (1938, Mervyn LeRoy), with Lombard, Fernand Gravet, and Bellamy. . . . ¶ Aug. 27 at 3:30, 6:30, and 9:30: "Lady by Choice" (1934, David Burton), with May Robson, Connolly, and Lombard. . . . ¶ Aug. 28 at 2, 5:30, and 9: "In Name Only" (†). . . . ¶ Aug. 28 at 3:45 and 7;15: "The Gay Bride" (1934, Jack Conway), with Lombard, Chester Morris, Nat Pendleton, Sam Hardy, and Leo Carrillo. . . . ¶ Aug. 29 at 2, 5:15, and 8:15: "Supernatural" (1933, Victor Halperin), with Lombard and Randolph Scott. . . . ¶ Aug. 29 at 3:30, 6:30, and 9:30: "Made for Each Other" (1939, John Cromwell), with Lombard, James Stewart, and Charles Coburn. . . . ¶ Aug. 30 at 2, 6, and 10: "To Be or Not to Be" (1942, Ernst Lubitsch), with Lombard, Jack Benny, Robert Stack, and Felix Bressart. . . . ¶ Aug. 30 at 4 and 8: "Vigil in the Night" (†). . . . ¶ Aug. 31 at 2 and 6:30 and Sept. 1 at 4:30 and 9:15: "The Fate of Lee Khan" (1973, King Hu). . . . ¶ Aug. 31 at 4:15 and 9 and Sept. 1 at 2 and 6:30: "The Pioneers" (1979, Richard Y. Chen). . . . ¶ Sept. 2 at 2: "A Touch of Zen" (1969-75, King Hu).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077) "American Impressionist: A Robert Altman Retrospective." Aug. 29 at 2: "Popeye" (†). . . . ¶ Aug. 29 at 4:30: "Come Back to the 5 & Dime Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean" (†). . . . ¶ Aug. 30 at 2: "Secret Honor" (†) . . . . ¶ Aug. 30 at 4: "Streamers" (1983), with Mitchell Lichenstein and Matthew Modine.

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5181)—Aug. 28 at 7: "The Eleventh Hour" (1928, Dziga Vertov). . . . ¶ Aug. 28 at 8:15: "Man with a Movie Camera" (1928, Vertov). . . . ¶ Aug. 28 at 10: "Old and New" (1929, Sergei Eisenstein; in Russian). . . . ¶ Aug. 29 at 4: A program of short films by Louis and Auguste Lumière. . . . ¶ Aug. 29 at 5:45: A program of films by George Méliès. . . . ¶ Aug. 29 at 6:45: A program of films by George Landow. . . . ¶ Aug. 29 at 8: "Three Songs of Lenin" (1934, Vertov). . . . ¶ Aug. 29 at 9:15: "Enthusiasm" (1931, Vertov; in Russian). . . . ¶ Aug. 30 at 3: A program of films by Andy Warhol and John and James Whitney. . . . ¶ Aug. 30 at 4:30: "À Propos de Nice" (1930), "Taris" (1931), and "Zero for Conduct" (1933), all by Jean Vigo. . . . ¶ Aug. 30 at 6: A film by Michael Snow. . . . ¶ Aug. 30 at 7:15: A program of films by Harry Smith.

Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., State Office Building, 163 W. 125th St. (873-5040)—Aug. 24 at 6:30 and 8:40: "Black Athena" (1992) and "Dr. Jeffries' Albany Lecture" (1991). . . . ¶ Aug. 25 at 6:30: "Quilombo" (1984, Carlos Diegues), with Antonia Pompeo; and "We Came Before Columbus" (1989, Clemson Brown). . . . ¶ Aug. 26 at 6:30: "Straight Out of Brooklyn" (1991, Matty Rich); and "To Sleep with Anger" (1990, Charles Burnett), with Danny Glover, Mary Alice, Vonette McGee, and Richard Brooks. . . . ¶ Aug. 27 at 6:30: "Livin' Large!" (1991, Michael Schultz), with Terrence (T. C.) Carson and Blanche Baker; and "Up Against the Wall" (1992, Ron O'Neal). . . .¶ Aug. 28 at 6:30: "James Brown Film Festival.". . . ¶ Aug. 29 at 6: "Muhammad Ali: The Greatest" (1977), a documentary, and "Malcolm X: By Any Means Necessary" (1990). . . . ¶ Aug. 30 at 2 and 5:40: "Mo' Better Blues" (1990, Spike Lee), with Denzel Washington, Lee, Wesley Snipes, Giancarlo Esposito, Joie Lee, Cynda Williams, Dick Anthony Williams, Robin Harris, and John and Nicholas Turturro; and "Sweet Love, Bitter" (1967, Herbert Danska), with Dick Gregory, Don Murray, Diane Varsi, and Robert Hooks. . . . ¶ Aug. 31 at 6:30: "Sugar Cane Alley" (1983, Euzhan Paley; in French); and "Fields of Endless Day" (Terence McCarthey-Filgate).

IN BRIEF

SEE ABOVE FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS.
IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA" DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow.)

Batman Returns—Tim Burton's sequel to his phenomenally successful 1989 "Batman" doesn't try to top the first picture, either with splashier special effects or with loftier pretensions to significance; nor does it simply go through the motions, repeating the surefire stuff with a self-satisfied air of professionalism. It's a blend of playful novelty and reassuring familiarity—a difficult mixture to get right. This time, the hero (again Michael Keaton) does battle with a greedy businessman named Max Shreck (Christopher Walken) and the roly-poly arch-criminal known as the Penguin (Danny DeVito). And whenever Batman ventures out on one of his nocturnal crime-fighting missions, he runs into a mysterious woman who dresses like a cat and carries a whip. The hilariously twisted relationship between the hero and the Catwoman (Michelle Pfeiffer) plays like an apache dance in animal costumes, and it's the glory of the movie. The cat clothes seem to release something strange and wild in Pfeiffer: her performance is ferociously sexy and uninhibitedly, over-the-top funny. As in the first movie, Burton gives the material a luxurious masked-ball quality and a sly contemporary wit without violating the myth's low, cheesy comic-book origins. He's an artist who's comfortable with both the higher aspirations and the lower instincts of his nature as an entertainer: he and Batman are an ideal match. Screenplay by Daniel Waters; cinematography by Stefan Czapsky; score by Danny Elfman; production design by Bo Welch.—T.R. (Reviewed in our issue of 6/29/92.) (19th Street East 6, and Criterion Center.)

The Best Intentions—It boasts the built-in interest of a script by Ingmar Bergman, dramatizing the courtship and early married life of his parents. Bille August directed, and Jorgen Persson did the cinematography; their square filmmaking has an antique sheen. But they've made an orderly movie about disorderly conduct. At three hours, the drama, about the mismatch between a tormented, self-denying pastor (Samuel Froler) and a coddled bourgeois woman (Pernilla August), is one prolonged, unrevealing study in frustration. Of course we know that these two won't live happily ever after; they did give birth to Ingmar Bergman. With its inexorable depiction of increasing marital woe, this film is the cinematic equivalent of predestination. Except for the expressive Max von Sydow (in the role of Bergman's maternal grandfather), the actors don't operate in a climate of free will; they register carefully prescribed dollops of anguish. In Swedish.—M.S. (7/27/92) (Quad Cinema, and Carnegie Hall Cinemas.)

Boomerang—Set in a world where entire upscale companies are run by African-Americans, this Eddie Murphy vehicle tries hard to be positive. It's a pity that the movie isn't any good. Murphy is a Manhattan marketing hot shot and ladies' man who ends up working under the woman of his dreams (Robin Givens) when their cosmetics firms merge. She treats him as cavalierly as he treated the previous women in his life; the script hands out one earnest lesson after another, so that he can learn what it feels like to be used. Givens knows how to employ her flashing eyes and chiselled, haughty features for comic effect, but she doesn't get a single clever line. As the gal who strives to save the hero, Halle Berry is so much more accessible than Givens, while being equally pretty, that dramatically there's no contest. Murphy has a couple of peppy scenes with David Alan Grier and Martin Lawrence, who play his best buddies, but a lot of the time he acts unconvincingly modest. The screenplay (by Barry W. Blaustein and David Sheffield), with its constant references to Murphy's sexual magnetism, does all the bragging for him. Padded with manic interludes involving Eartha Kitt, Geoffrey Holder, and Grace Jones; directed by Reginald Hudlin.—M.S. (7/13/92) (Embassy. . . .¶ 59th Street East Cinema. Evenings only. . . . ¶ 19th Street East 6; Aug. 24.)

Come Back to the 5 & Dime Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean (1982)—It's doubtful if a major film director has ever before voluntarily taken on as thoroughgoing a piece of drivel as this one—a play by Ed Graczyk set in a Texas small-town 5 & Dime and centering on the reunion of a James Dean fan club on the twentieth anniversary of his death. The movie version shouldn't work, but it does. When Robert Altman gives a project everything he's got, his skills are such that he can make poetry out of fake poetry and magic out of fake magic. Moving in apparent freedom, the principal actresses—Sandy Dennis, Cher, Karen Black, and, in a smaller part, Marta Heflin—go at their roles so creatively that they find some kind of acting truth in what they're doing. They bring conviction to their looneytunes characters. Also with Sudie Bond, Kathy Bates, and, in the only male role, Mark Patton. The airy and lyrical cinematography is by Pierre Mignot.—P.K. (American Museum of the Moving Image; Aug. 29.)

Death Becomes Her—If he'd cut it to twenty-six minutes, Robert Zemeckis' duelling-bitch comedy would have been a super episode of the HBO anthology series, "Tales from the Crypt." It stars Meryl Streep as a Broadway-Hollywood diva, Goldie Hawn as her high-school chum, and Bruce Willis as the plastic surgeon they both desire. At its peak, Zemeckis, the cast, and the special-effects team achieve de-luxe variations on the TV show's macabre slapstick. But at a hundred and three minutes, the laughs dribble away. The script, by Martin Donovan and David Koepp, which pivots on an immortality potion, is basically an excuse for Streep and Hawn to wallop each other with the aid of flesh-bending special effects. Too often the lines are witless and the narrative invention pitiful. The best reason to see the movie is Streep. In this film about women losing control of their bodies, she is more at home in hers than ever before.—M.S. (8/24/92) (34th St. East, Chelsea Cinemas, Ziegfeld, and Regency. . . ¶ Coronet, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Art Greenwich Twin; through Aug. 27.)

Enchanted April—Adapted by Peter Barnes from Elizabeth von Arnim's 1922 novel, this period romance has a healthy sprinkling of bewitchments. The lead characters are two proper middle-class English ladies, played by Josie Lawrence and Miranda Richardson, who, partly to get away from their husbands, pool their resources to rent an Italian villa named San Salvatore for a month. They ultimately share expenses with an austere, cultured widow (Joan Plowright) and a gorgeous, bored aristocrat (Polly Walker). Italy awakens the women's sensuality and imagination, and gives them perspective; Lawrence and Richardson end up jolting their deadhead husbands (played by Alfred Molina and Jim Broadbent) back to life. The director, Mike Newell, handles the performers deftly and sympathetically, from the wonderfully ebullient Lawrence and the ravishing Walker to the robustly comical Plowright; Michael Kitchen contributes a tour de force of eccentric charm as the villa's owner. If the film, with its brittle, satiric London scenes and its expansive Italian ones, breaks too distinctly into pieces, the magic of the sunnier locations seals the cracks. The cinematographer, Rex Maidment, captures the enveloping pastoral euphoria of San Salvatore; the movie was shot at the same Mediterranean estate where von Arnim composed her novel.—M.S. (8/10/92) (Angelika Film Center, and Cinema II.)

At Film Forum 2, Vera Clouzot and Simone Signoret in "Diabolique"

Howards End—James Ivory's movie version of the 1910 E. M. Forster novel is a handsome and intelligent piece of work: a faithful, well-paced, and carefully crafted dramatization of a very good story. The heroine, Margaret Schlegel (Emma Thompson), is a thirtyish Englishwoman of German ancestry who lives with her sister and her brother in a London town house. The plot brings the cultured and rather high-minded Schlegels in contact with a very different sort of family, the Wilcoxes, who appear to represent English values at their most infuriatingly solid and complacent. The emotional core of the movie is the brief, unlikely friendship that develops between Margaret and conservative Ruth Wilcox (Vanessa Redgrave), a woman who inhabits a narrow world so profoundly, and with such enormous feeling, that she transforms it. Redgrave is at her most radiant in this role. And Thompson, whose character is meant to be seen as the heir to Mrs. Wilcox's thoroughly English kind of spirituality, comes through with a thrilling, original performance; she carries the movie. These luminous performances go a long way toward putting Forster's ambitious ideas across on the screen. (Anthony Hopkins, as the no-nonsense businessman Henry Wilcox, is awfully good, too.) The story holds us for the full two hours and twenty minutes that the movie takes to tell it; Ivory and his screenwriter, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, have done a skillful and sensitive job of adaptation. All that's missing, really, is the elusive quality that makes Forster such a brave, moving writer: his constant striving to see beyond the story, to see through it, to transcend it.—T.R. (5/4/92) (Fine Arts.)

In Name Only (1939)—Slinky Kay Francis is the coldhearted wife in name only. All she wants of her husband, Cary Grant, is his wealth and social position, while he is so desperate for a divorce in order to marry the companionable Carole Lombard, a young widow with a small daughter, that he becomes ill and almost dies of pneumonia. This is one of the rare movies in which the robust Grant actually has sickbed scenes. John Cromwell directed this "mature" ("Dodsworth"-influenced) view of marital incompatibility, which emphasizes the wife's shrewdness in manipulating her in-laws. It's a solemn, soapy picture, but with unusually good performances. With Charles Coburn as Grant's father, and Helen Vinson, Peggy Ann Garner, Katharine Alexander, Alan Baxter, Maurice Moscovitch, and Nella Walker. Adapted by Richard Sherman, from Bessie Breuer's novel "Memory of Love."—P.K. (Walter Reade Theatre; Aug. 28.)

A League of Their Own—Penny Marshall's fictional account of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League has no mind of its own. Marshall directed it with both eyes on the audience. She and the screenwriting team of Lowell Ganz and Babaloo Mandel slap together a bare-bones narrative (about the league's 1943 début season) and dress it up with set-piece gags and sentimental ploys. All they want is for people to come out saying that they laughed and they cried. The lead characters are Dottie Hinson (Geena Davis) and her kid sister, Kit Keller (Lori Petty), who catch and pitch, respectively, for the Rockford Peaches and act out their sibling tensions on the baseball diamond and in the locker room. Tom Hanks mugs ingratiatingly as Jimmy Dugan, the Rockford coach and an alcoholic former slugger, and Madonna sashays through the supporting role of All the Way Mae, a ballplayer who tests the league's deportment code. This movie aims for the tear ducts and the funny bone as ruthlessly as the summer's big action-fantasy hits go after the viscera. It unfolds in field-of-dreams land—complete with cornstalks.—M.S. (7/13/92) (Village Theatre VII, Tower East, Chelsea Cinemas, and Worldwide Cinemas. . . . ¶ 62nd & Broadway; through Aug. 27.)

Night on Earth—This anthology film, written and directed by Jim Jarmusch ("Stranger Than Paradise"), has a gimmicky premise. Each of its five stories takes place in a different city, and each is about a taxicab ride. All the trips are going on at the same time, but in different time zones, so there's an illusion of temporal progress: the picture begins at sunset in Los Angeles and ends at dawn in Helsinki. (The intervening episodes take place in New York, Paris, and Rome.) It's a feeble but serviceable conceit; if the sketches were funny, we'd barely notice the preciousness of the structure. Unfortunately, the material is very thin, and the movie doesn't vary its style from sketch to sketch: Jarmusch sticks doggedly to his trademark deadpan manner. The comedian Roberto Benigni, playing a motor-mouth cabbie in the Italian episode, briefly enlivens the picture with a riotous erotic monologue. But, for the most part, the movie induces in the viewer an eerie, suspended feeling that mimics the time-stands-still monotony of a long airplane journey. It tries for a chipper, lighthearted tone, but it gives the audience a gruelling flight—a red-eye to nowhere. In English, French, Italian, and Finnish.—T.R. (5/18/92) (Angelika Film Center.)

One False Move—Skillfully performed and welcomely unpredictable, this low-budget crime film, made by actor-turned-director Carl Franklin, starts out as a herky-jerky exploitation piece, then turns into something better. After a jolting series of execution-style killings, a trio of crooks go on the lam from Los Angeles to Star City, Arkansas, where two L.A. lawmen and a local sheriff lie

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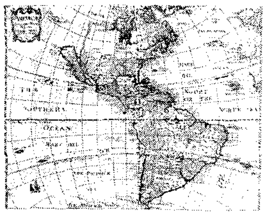

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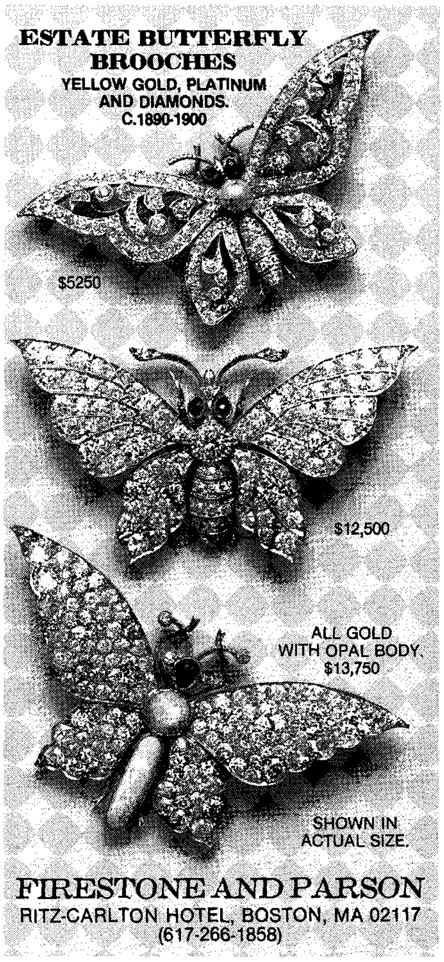
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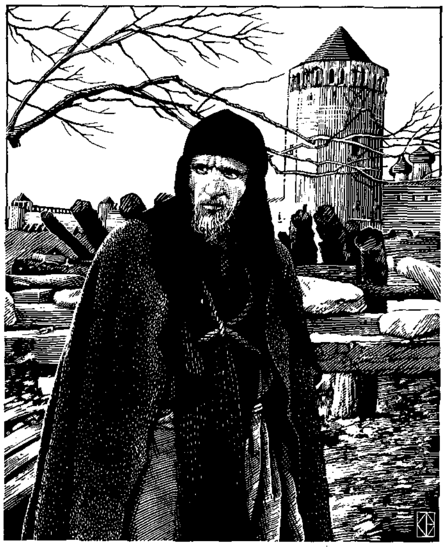
in wait. What saves the opening sequences is the inspired pairing of a black sociopath (Michael Beach) and a white psychopath (played by Billy Bob Thornton, who co-wrote the script with Tom Epperson). Beach's inhuman brilliance and Thornton's edgy earthiness make them deadly companions. Cynda Williams, as Thornton's African-American lover, hits on marvellous combinations of ingenuousness and amorality, even when the script plays peekaboo with motivation. Meanwhile, Star City's sheriff (Bill Paxton) tries to persuade the visiting metropolitan cops (Jim Metzler and Earl Billings) that he's ripe for big-time law enforcement. Paxton lays on the hick ingratiation, but midway through he shows how this good ole boy grows into a good ole man. Like Paxton, the movie improves as it goes along; it leaves hokum as well as wholesale carnage far behind.—M.S. (7/27/92) (Village Theatre VII, and Sutton.)

Patriot Games—Phillip Noyce's film, adapted from one of Tom Clancy's jillion-selling suspense novels, is a much more effective thriller than it has any right to be. The screenwriters, W. Peter Iliff and Donald Stewart, have eliminated much of the novel's hot air without entirely knocking the wind out of the material; the script tones down Clancy's right-wing ideology and gives the story some straightforward action-movie narrative drive. The plot, which pits Irish terrorists against an Annapolis history professor and sometime C.I.A. analyst named Jack Ryan (Harrison Ford), is ridiculous, boys'-adventure stuff, but the filmmakers almost put it across. Noyce handles the action sequences beautifully: they're lucid and exciting, and their construction has a kind of formal elegance that's oddly satisfying. (He's less successful with the scenes of the Ryan family's domestic bliss, which are meant to establish Jack's credentials as a champion of traditional values.) Ford brings a welcome trace of ambivalence to his character's heroics—a sense that Ryan isn't altogether proud of the lethal efficiency he displays when he's drawn into combat. Sean Bean, Richard Harris, and (especially) James Fox do nice work in supporting roles. This is an expert, entertaining genre picture. Noyce and his team serve Clancy's crude material well—too well, probably. Also with Anne Archer (who's awful), Thora Birch, James Earl Jones, Samuel L. Jackson, and Patrick Bergin.—T.R. (6/15/92) (19th Street East 6, and Festival. . . . ¶ Worldwide Cinemas. Evenings only.)

The Player—The title character of Robert Altman's new movie is a young Hollywood studio executive named Griffin Mill (Tim Robbins), who, for no very good reason, murders an aspiring screenwriter. The picture is a brilliant dark comedy about the death of American filmmaking. It's like a documentary about a mirage: the world it shows us is sunlit and shimmering, and the people have the thin presence of holograms. Altman is doing one of his specialties here—exploring an odd American subculture—and when his idiosyncratic realism is applied to the insular, constantly self-regarding community of Hollywood "players" it has an almost hallucinatory effect. The movie has the exhilarating nonchalance of the director's seventies classics, and its tone is volatile, elusive: with breathtaking assurance, it veers from psychological-thriller suspense to goofball comedy to icy satire. Altman turns the self-reflective world of Hollywood into a fun house in which every grotesque distortion somehow appears to us as a newly discovered, paradoxical truth. Robbins gives a layered, richly suggestive performance—the sort of performance that Altman's style, at its best, produces without obvious effort. At sixty-seven, Altman still seems like the youngest filmmaker in America. Also with Greta Scacchi, Peter Gallagher, Fred Ward, Whoopi Goldberg, Cynthia Stevenson, Vincent D'Onofrio, Lyle Lovett, Dean Stockwell, and Richard E. Grant; dozens of movie stars (and a handful of writers) turn up in cameos. The script, by Michael Tolkin, is adapted from his own novel.—T.R. (4/20/92) (Village East Cinemas, and Cinema 3. . . . ¶ First & 62nd Cinemas. Evenings only.)

Popeye (1980)—Sometimes the components of a picture seem miraculously right and you go to it expecting a magical interaction. That's the case with "Popeye," with Robin Williams as the squinting sailor, and Shelley Duvall as the persnickety Olive Oyl, and Robert Altman directing, from a screenplay by Jules Feiffer. The picture doesn't come together, though, and much of it is cluttered, squawky, and eerily unfunny. But there are lovely moments—especially when Olive is loping along or singing, and when she and Popeye are gazing adoringly at the foundling Swee'Pea (Wesley Ivan Hurt). The songs—an uneven collection—are by Harry Nilsson. With Paul Dooley as Wimpy, Paul L. Smith as Bluto, and, as Pappy, Ray Walston, whose rambunctious Broadway pizzazz cheapens everything.—P.K. (American Museum of the Moving Image; Aug. 29.)



At MOMA, Anatoliy Solonitsyn in "Andrei Roublev"

Prelude to a Kiss—The director, Norman René, and the writer, Craig Lucas, who collaborated on the play, have mounted the movie as if it were still before the footlights. The actors—Meg Ryan and Alec Baldwin as the romantic couple, Sydney Walker as the mysterious Old Man, and even supporting performers like Stanley Tucci (Baldwin's best friend and best man)—are as emotionally weak as they are gesturally emphatic. There's no behavior here, only stage action, and it thuds on celluloid. The camera ruthlessly reveals the simultaneous thinness and clunkiness of the whimsy at the drama's core. The pivotal twist involves a soul-transference that's supposed to test the groom's vow to love his bride "all the more" when she shows the ravages of age. The concept's wispiness allows audiences to project their own agendas onto the script: the play has been perceived as an imaginative comment on everything from sexual orientation to the durability of love in the epoch of AIDS. Yet Lucas's banal language and fairy-tale sophistries oversimplify rather than enrich matters. There's no felt life on the screen. When Alec Baldwin cries, there's isn't a wet eye in the house.—M.S. (7/27/92) (Carnegie Hall Cinemas.)

Raising Cain—Brian De Palma has created a convoluted black comedy about an unhinged child psychologist, played by John Lithgow. He obsesses about the upbringing of his little daughter, and approaches breakdown at roughly the same time that his wife (Lolita Davidovich) falls into the arms of her ex-boyfriend (Steven Bauer). De Palma is devil-may-care about subjects that are usually treated with deathly seriousness, and he's audacious in his dislocation effects, turning what are normally flaws in a thriller—withholding information and jumping ahead of the plot—into narrative ruses that take the ground out from under a viewer's feet. But some of these flaws remain flaws. And the movie, for all its goofiness, lacks the soul of abandon that helped make De Palma's earlier suspense films wild sprees. The only way to enjoy the film is to identify not with the characters but with De Palma himself, as he raises and confounds expectations, and scatters bits of other movies (especially Michael Powell's "Peeping Tom") into a headlong pastiche. De Palma heaps everything on except his sensibility; it's like the shoot-the-works special at a pizza joint. In the best scenes, Lithgow (who plays multiple roles), Gregg Henry, Tom Bower, Barton Heyman,

The original 1953 "Invaders from Mars" (playing August 29-31, at Film Forum 2) is an ideal first science-fiction film: grade-schoolers inevitably put themselves in the place of the child hero (Jimmy Hunt), a serious science fan whose lack of pretension and gush keeps him from coming off as a nerd. After he spots a spaceship touching down in the hills just beyond his back yard, he tries to warn unsuspecting authorities that the Martians have landed and are turning neighbors into slaves by a mysterious process that leaves a scar on the back of the neck. The boy may not be a complex character, but he's a surefire identification figure, the precursor of Steven Spielberg's juvenile surrogates. As he struggles to convince friendly yet sometimes sinister and uncomprehending cops, the film becomes Kafka for Kids.

The main reason the movie still holds up as a divertissement is the humorous, haunting incongruity between the fifties middle-American settings and the alien spaceship. The director, William Cameron Menzies—the legendary production designer of "Our Town" and "Gone with the Wind"—echoes Norman Rockwell's tones and compositions, then twists them. Menzies creates an atmosphere similar to that of the "Twilight Zone" series: a sense of catastrophe hovers over a settled, seemingly impregnable world. Some of the effects are chintzy. The Martians' mutant helpers (pronounced "mute-ants") look like frogmen; you can even see the zippers on their backs. But Menzies' over-arching inventions are so creepy-clever that they cover up the movie's shortcomings. His suggestions of people falling into a whirling sand pit are eerier than anything in Tobe Hooper's 1986 remake. So is the Martians' heat ray, which causes walls to swell and pop as if they had a galloping outbreak of acne.

and Frances Sternhagen spark off each other with the casual, skit-comic humor that De Palma mastered more than twenty years ago.—M.S. (8/24/92) (Murray Hill Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, Worldwide Cinemas, Metro Cinema, and National Twin. . . . ¶ 86th Street East Twin. Evenings only.)

Secret Honor (1984)—As Richard Milhous Nixon, Philip Baker Hall delivers a wild rumination on his life—a mixture of confession and self-exoneration. Directed by Robert Altman, the movie has a heightened quality, as if all the tumult of Nixon's last year in the White House, his resignation, and his pardon—all the news that we devoured from magazines and the papers and TV, and the constant streams of revelations—were compacted into this frazzled monologue. It's a seizure, a crackup, and the near-pornographic excess of the display is transfixing. There's a virtuoso naughtiness about the sureness of Altman's touch here; he has a small, weird triumph with this gonzo psychodocudrama. From the play by Donald Freed and Arnold M. Stone; cinematography by Pierre Mignot.—P.K. (American Museum of the Moving Image; Aug. 30.)

Single White Female—The movie collapses so thoroughly between its promising introduction and its Grand Guignol conclusion that the audience exits muttering about stupidity and waste. Mainly, what's wasted is the talent of two fresh, still-growing stars, Bridget Fonda and Jennifer Jason Leigh, in the roles of twentyish out-of-towners scrambling to survive in New York City. Leigh answers Fonda's ad for a roommate and immediately charms her way into a rent-controlled Upper West Side apartment. Virtually from the start you guess that Leigh's character plans to become Fonda's identical twin. It's merely a matter of time before this unformed young lady tries on Fonda's clothes, bearing, and hairdo, and wipes out any competition for Fonda's attention. The actresses are compelling; Leigh is particularly adept at furtive, inchoate emotions. But when the climax of a movie is inevitable, the director shouldn't delay it as long as Barbet Schroeder does. The movie is mostly just a tiresome tease.—M.S. (8/24/92) (Village Theatre VII, Bay Cinema, Beekman, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, Worldwide Cinemas, and 84th Street Sixplex. . . . ¶ National Twin; through Aug. 27.)

Sister Act—Whoopi Goldberg stars as a Reno lounge singer on the lam from her murderous mobster ex-lover (Harvey Keitel). Disguised as a nun in a San Francisco convent, she manages to bring new music into the choir, fresh street faces into the pews, and a social-activist spirit into the revitalized congregation. The plot and the characters are almost insultingly perfunctory (the pseudonymous Joseph Howard is credited with the script), and when there isn't any rock on the soundtrack the moviemaking is listless. Still, the director, Emile Ardolino, who made "Dirty Dancing," knows how to use sixties hits for an over-all bounce that jumps audiences past dead patches. Goldberg maintains her gruff tone, which helps keep the film from stagnating with sappiness. If Maggie Smith glowers ineffectually as the Mother Superior, a couple of actresses—Kathy Najimy and Mary Wickes—imbue their nun roles with the euphoria of inspired farceurs. (Najimy defines "overjoyed.") The film isn't a divine comedy, and it's not satisfyingly profane either. But it generates a few laughs. It's got a good beat, and you can dance to it.—M.S. (6/15/92) (Village East Cinemas, Cinema 3rd Avenue, Worldwide Cinemas.)

A Stranger Among Us—At least there's the kick of hearing piping-voiced Melanie Griffith refer to the Cabala as "that Jewish Kama Sutra." Griffith plays a New York cop who goes undercover in the Hasidic community to investigate a murder. She moves into the household of the Rebbe (Lee Richardson), befriends his adopted daughter (Mia Sara), and comes on to his adopted son (Eric Thal). Apart from deflecting the proposals of her hospitalized boyfriend-partner (Jamey Sheridan) and the propositions of her aggressive replacement partner (John Pankow), she doesn't do much; detective work hardly enters into Robert J. Avrech's script. There aren't even any red herrings—certainly not kosher ones, since the filmmakers share the Hasidim's view of their community as a peaceable kingdom. The director, Sidney Lumet, abetted by the cinematographer, Andrzej Bartkowiak, relentlessly aestheticizes the world of his fathers. Griffith's artless embodiment of the script's deranged idea of tough-gal gumption isn't as amusing as it should be. She's a B-picture heroine stuck in an absurdly self-conscious prestige project.—M.S. (7/27/92) (Village East Cinemas, Cinema I, and Columbus Circle. . . . ¶ Murray Hill Cinemas, and 86th Street East Twin. Evenings only.)

Unforgiven—Set in eighteen-eighties Kansas and Wyoming, this engrossing, moody Western is the sixteenth film Clint Eastwood has directed, and by far the best. The canny script, by David Webb Peoples, revives the old story about the retired gunfighter (Eastwood) who picks up his firearms again for one last score. But there's no easy resolution, and the movie is stronger because of its loose ends: the filmmakers acknowledge that the bloody chaos of an outlaw's life can't be settled in two hours and eleven minutes. The action begins when a cowboy slashes the face of a prostitute, and her co-workers pool their money to offer a reward for the murder of him and his partner. Jaimz Woolvett is the upstart who enlists Eastwood in the bounty hunt. Morgan Freeman plays Eastwood's longtime partner, Gene Hackman a megalomaniac sheriff, Richard Harris a flamboyant English gunslinger, and Saul Rubinek a dime novelist. This is the finest set of performances ever to grace a Clint Eastwood movie, and this time Eastwood even does a good job directing Eastwood. Every bullet in this movie matters; under its leathery hide is a genuine compulsion to de-romanticize Western gunfighting.—M.S. (8/10/92) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, Orpheum VII, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center. . . . ¶ New York Twin; through Aug. 27.)

Unlawful Entry—Madeleine Stowe and Kurt Russell play an upwardly mobile L.A. couple; Ray Liotta is the cop who thinks he's a better man for Stowe. For about ten minutes, the movie is an effective exploitation of atavistic male pride, with class warfare mixed in. But it swiftly degenerates into another cat-and-mice thriller—and this time both the cat and, fatally, the audience are much smarter than the mice. The film is short on observation and long on jeopardy. It's what TV executives call "a Jep movie," except that in TV Jep movies the victimized woman gets to avenge herself. Here she needs the protection of her husband. Jonathan Kaplan directed the script by Lewis Colick; Ken Lerner, as Russell's lawyer, and Roger E. Mosley, as Liotta's partner, contribute a smidgen of self-aware humor and realism.—M.S. (7/13/92) (Worldwide Cinemas. Evenings only. . . . ¶ Gotham Cinema; through Aug. 25.)

Vigil in the Night (1940)—This adaptation of an A. J. Cronin novel was a mistake from the word go, but the director, George Stevens, plodded ahead valiantly, dressing up the hopeless. Given the most resplendent makeup and lights, Carole Lombard glows with foolish nobility in the role of a trained nurse who takes the blame for a frivolous—and fatal—mistake by her student-nurse kid sister (Anne Shirley), also lighted phosphorescently; you expect the two girls to rise to Heaven by their cheekbones. After a solemn while, a busload of people are maimed, and eventually the beautiful nurses and Brian Aherne, as the doctor Lombard loves, become involved in an epidemic of cerebrospinal fever. With Robert Coote, Peter Cushing, Brenda Forbes, Doris Lloyd, and Ethel Griffies.—P.K. (Walter Reade Theatre; Aug. 30.)

Wednesday's Child (1971)—Valuable as an attack on the use of shock therapy and drugs in the care of disturbed people, but simplistic in its brief for R. D. Laing's methods of treatment. Ken Loach directed this cinéma-vérité-style English movie, which centers on a passive, weak-willed nineteen-year-old girl (Sandy Ratcliff) crushed by her rigid family and falling apart because of her regimented existence. Sent to a hospital, she is at first treated in a relaxed, informal experimental ward run by a Laingian, and it appears that she merely needs to learn to stand up to her family. But the Laingian is dismissed and she is given shock treatment and is left, at the end, a vegetable. David Mercer wrote the script, from his play "In Two Minds." There are a few striking performances in the simulations of documentary footage. If you're not convinced by the Laing thesis, though, you may get very impatient.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Aug. 29-30.)

Whispers in the Dark—The writer-director, Christopher Crowe, grapples feebly with women's sexual desires. The heroine is a shrink, played by Annabella Sciorra, and the plot is tinged with topicality: Sciorra dates and beds a ruggedly handsome aviator (Jamey Sheridan) who happens to be connected to one of her patients—a voluptuous woman named Eve (Deborah Unger). In therapy, Eve details increasingly dangerous episodes of bondage, and her stories get Sciorra so hot that she goes back into therapy herself, with her university mentor, Alan Alda. The movie's pompous trappings make its inept, desperate attention-grabbing stand out. Crowe flubs maneuvers that true horror directors know instinctively, like how to stage the heroine braining a man and not provoke the wrong kind of laughter. Unger is a good actress and a ripe sexual presence. The rest of the performers include Anthony LaPaglia as a hostile police detective, Jill Clayburgh as Alda's supportive wife, Anthony Heald as Sciorra's sad-sack ex-lover, and John Leguizamo as an unhinged artist named Fast Johnny C. Seasoned moviegoers will be able to spot Crowe's ace in the hole just from reading the credits.—M.S. (8/24/92) (Orpheum VII, Art Greenwich Twin, and 84th Street Sixplex. . . . ¶ 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, New York Twin, and Embassy; through Aug. 27.)

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Notes and Comment

NOW that the Soviet Union has disintegrated, many of us are turning to a more durable enemy to terrify our imaginations: Adolf Hitler. That Hitler died almost fifty years ago is irrelevant to his continuing fame; the public obsession with him appears to be inextinguishable. This spring and summer, Nazi Germany made headlines in the United States and Europe on several occasions: when neo-Nazis marched in Berlin for the first time since the Second World War, only to be attacked with stones and bottles by counter-protesters; when Boris Yeltsin asked President Bush to help the Russians dredge up leaking tanks of mustard gas from the Baltic Sea, where defeated German forces had dumped them after the war; and when certain diaries of Joseph Goebbels were discovered, and revealed the startling "news" that Hitler meant to invade Poland a year before he did.

The survival of Hitler in the public imagination comes, in part, from his success in carrying out a plan for human destruction on a scale so preternaturally large and mechanically efficient and yet so theatrical that it dazzles even as it horrifies. The accoutrements of the Hitler era are universally recognized and frequently imitated: swastikas, double eagles, armbands, jackboots, the Nazi salute—surely, no more effective props for a theatre of evil have ever been devised. Moreover, Hitler was so proud of his undertaking that he sought to preserve as many records of it as possible, going as far as to commission heroic documentaries of his ascent—available today on video—while his generals and ministers kept their own records: logbooks, itineraries, journals, photographs. No other rise to tyranny has been so extensively documented. One Hitler chronicler noted a few years ago, "There are twice as many biographies of Hitler as there are of Winston Churchill; three times as many as there are of Roosevelt and Stalin. Only Jesus Christ has had more words devoted to him than Hitler."

The recent reappearance of the Nazis on the world stage has coincided with Germany's reunification, and reflects both a secret fear in the rest of the world that Germany's nightmarish past is on the verge of reasserting itself and a less secret conviction that Germany's reëmergence as an economic and political giant in Europe is nothing short of ominous. Only two years ago, a British Cabinet Minister had to resign when his reference to the Bundesrepublik's dominance of the European Community as "a German racket" was published in the press. But after he was gone anti-German sentiment remained, and no one was punished when, a day later, leaks from a discussion at Chequers, the British Prime Minister's country seat, had Margaret Thatcher, Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd, and six of their experts on Germany listing German character flaws as "angst, aggressiveness, assertiveness, bullying, egotism, inferiority complex, sentimentality." If any other nation had been the subject of such talk, it would have cost all concerned their jobs, but the rules are different for Germany.

Ironically, people rarely make a connection between the glut of Nazi imagery and the present realities of Germany. Yet in the last year workers have gone on strike to protest the costs of supporting "lazy" East Germans; ultra-rightist, xenophobic political parties have won parliamentary seats in several *Länder;* and skinheads have persisted in attacking and intimidating many of the hundreds of thousands of foreigners who have arrived in their country since the Berlin Wall fell. The great majority of Germans are embarrassed by these attacks, which they call *Fremdenfeindlichkeit*, or "inimical behavior toward strangers," but they are also resentful that simply because they are Germans they must be so much more attentive than the rest of us to such public-relations disasters. What those developments really point to is a need for the European Community to address immigration policy and relieve Germany of some of the refugee burden, and, perhaps, to discuss openly the dangerous rise of nationalism both in Germany and throughout Europe. Instead, news of disturbing trends has been sensationalized and then forgotten, as if what was reported weren't really happening.

The danger of the Hitler obsession, and of Great Man obsessions in general, is that they lull people and governments into a false sense of security—into thinking that

LAST PHARMACY

now that Hitler is dead, or now that Lenin's statues have fallen, peace and prosperity are guaranteed, and no further diplomatic efforts need be expended until a new tyrant declares himself. It is this kind of complacency that allowed the war in Yugoslavia to come about: leaders assumed that nothing serious could happen when the Second World War and the Cold War were done with and democracy had emerged triumphant. If they had looked, they would have found that it was not difficult to recognize Hitler's legacy in Yugoslavia—and, for that matter, in Somalia—but they didn't look. It's as if the whole world were stuck on the set of "Casablanca," congratulating itself for being on the right side in the "Good War." No one seems to remember that Germany was not the only country that behaved badly during the Second World War, or that in defeating Hitler we had not defeated nationalism for all time.

In fact, many of the ingredients of the two world wars are present today: high unemployment, a global economic recession, and widespread nationalist or neo-fascist movements. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the breakup of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia ought to have reminded us that, like submerged mustard gas, problems that have been ignored don't just go away. And pointing a finger at some current villain will do nothing to resolve the question of how the United States, the European Community, NATO, and the United Nations can prevent further fragmentation of Eastern Europe and establish their priorities in the volatile post-Cold War atmosphere. It has taken reports of Nazi-style concentration camps in Bosnia to spur world leaders to action on the war in Yugoslavia. Tens of thousands of deaths, it seems, could not pack the punch that one dose of Hitler imagery does. Call it Hitler's gift to the world: he, like no one before him, has the ability to make us remember history. Perhaps that is the secret of his endurance: people remember him because they can.

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The Smell

ABOUT a month ago, a terrible new smell turned up on North Moore Street, in Tribeca. It did not coexist peacefully with the other smells on the street: the coffee and cooking smells from Bubby's, a local hangout; the sweet, strong smell of olive oil stored in Hillside Imperial Foods; pepper and nutmeg smells from Atalanta, a spice warehouse; the beer smell from Walker's, the neighborhood bar; and the hay, manure, antiseptic, and horse-sweat smells coming out of the police stables on the corner of Varick. The new smell routed all those other smells. The rich olfactory texture of the street was shattered.

The smell seemed to have no center. Sometimes it stayed at the east end of the street, sometimes at the west end. Sometimes it left North Moore altogether and glided down to Franklin or up to Beach. It behaved more like a mist than like a smell, rising at odd hours of the night, clinging to cobblestones and loading docks, creeping over roofs, and settling in the breezeways behind people's lofts. No one could say just what the smell was—only that it was certainly caused by putrefaction of some kind of flesh. Blaustein & Son, plumbers, at No. 32, thought that the smell might be rotting human flesh, and called the cops.

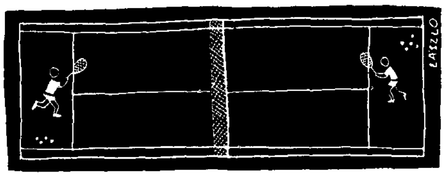
Blaustein: "We get a lot of bad smells in this business, but I never smelled anything like that."

Son: "It was like blood."

Blaustein: "A very stale, musty smell, like something in an old closet."

James Herman, a painter who lives at No. 42: "I worked in a slaughterhouse as a kid, and this was worse than anything I ever smelled on the killing floor. I think there were actually two smells. One was a dank, very musty odor, and the other was this real pungent, acid odor. It was a very aggressive smell."

Ernie Lee, a caterer, who lives at No. 40: "At first, I thought my dog had peed in the house, so I went out and invested in a bunch of disinfectants. Then I went to see if the fire hydrant outside the building was the source of the smell. I couldn't figure out where it was coming from. It was like a phantom smell. You'd be doing something and suddenly it would just show up, like a person. You couldn't do anything once it was there—couldn't eat, couldn't sleep, couldn't do any intimate acts."



Finally, someone had the idea of asking James, North Moore's homeless person, who sleeps in the doorway of No. 37. James pointed to No. 31-33 and said, "The Chinese."

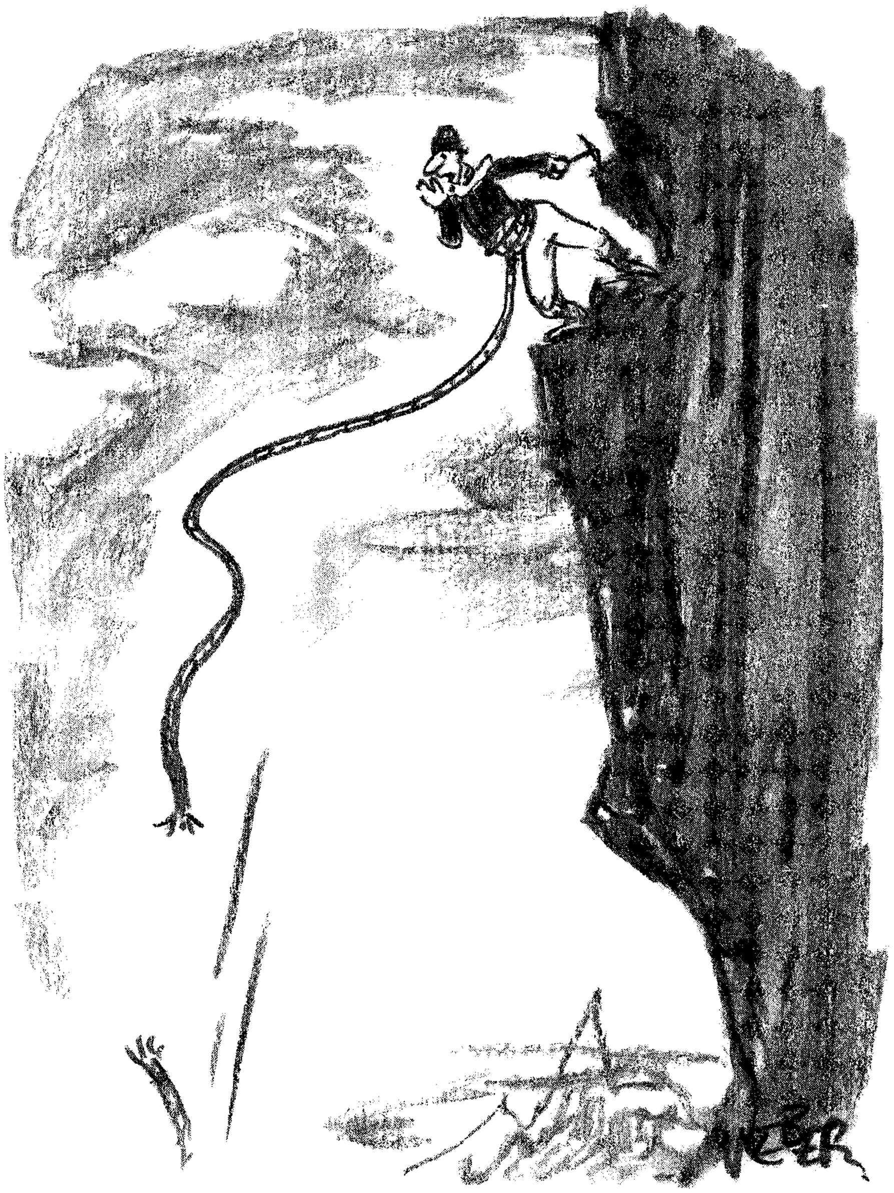
No. 31-33 is in the middle of the block and has a sign over the door that says "T. Chan Enterprises." It turned out that the owner, Mr. Charlie Chan, had been exporting food from there for about a year. Recently, he had expanded into the shark-fin business, which is a good business to be in these days. Crates full of the dorsal fins of different species of shark were being brought to 31-33, processed, and shipped to Asia for use in shark-fin soup. The classical method of processing a shark fin is to leave it out in the sun until it rots. Mr. Chan, lacking the facilities for that, was blowing hot air onto the fins in two saunalike chambers he had installed in the basement. The exhaust was being vented from a grate on the ground floor, into the air of North Moore Street.

A spell of humid August weather set in, and the smell on North Moore became unbearable. Pedestrians avoided the street. Cabdrivers wouldn't stop there. James the homeless person left. The smell got into Bouley and the Tribeca Grill, two of the fashionable restaurants in the area. By the middle of the month, Rachel Friedman, who lives on North Moore, had plastered the street with notices urging neighbors to call Kathryn Freed, their City Council member, and to call the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, in Brooklyn. Ms. Friedman had already spent two weeks on the phone with an array of municipal authorities, trying to figure out which one was responsible for bad smells. She had discovered that government is not constituted to cope with smells—that, of all the senses, smell is the least susceptible to regulation. "You'd think that in this city there would be some kind of Smell Complaint Bureau, but there isn't," Ms. Friedman says. "The Department of Agriculture and Markets told me that if the shark fins inside the building were spoiled it could do something. The Department of Sanitation told me that if shark fins were lying out on the sidewalk it could help. The Bureau of Consumer Affairs would be interested if someone was charging too much for shark fins. The E.P.A. wanted to know whether breathing shark fin was harmful to your health. But no one would touch smell. When I called Kathryn Freed's assistant, Stacy, and said 'Bad smell,' she wasn't too interested. When I said 'Rats,' that changed everything."

Kathryn Freed came and smelled the street. "It was like something had died. Horrible. A carrion stench," she said later. Then, a couple of weeks ago, Inspector Paul Feldman of Ag and Markets came and smelled the street, and decided to take a look at T. Chan Enterprises. (Inspector Feldman is the nearest thing this city has to an official nose.) On the way back to his office, he found that people were fleeing the subway car he was in, he smelled so bad. Soon afterward, Feldman returned, and confiscated some of the shark fins. He asked Mr. Chan to suspend his operation, and Mr. Chan did. Whether Mr. Chan will be cited for any violations depends on whether he ever had a license to process shark fins (apparently he didn't), and on whether the Ag and Markets lab determines that the shark fins are fit to eat. "If our inspectors seized the product, something probably isn't right with the fins," Mary Ann Waters, of Ag and Markets' public-affairs office, in Albany, said, explaining why the agency had the authority to shut Chan's shark-fin operation down. "We have reports that some of the fins may be insect infested. Maybe the Chinese like their shark fins this way, but in our view it isn't right."

Several days after the Ag and Markets action, we dropped in on T. Chan Enterprises and met Daniel Chan, the son of the owner. Daniel Chan said that the company was developing a new shark-fin-processing method, and hoped to resume operations soon, on the sixth floor. He took us to the basement. The smell at the top of the stairs was bad, and it became more awful with each step down. Maybe because smell is close to the center of fantasy, as we descended the stairs we had a vision of the shark-fin business from the shark's point of view—being caught, definned, and tossed overboard still alive, unable to swim, to be eaten by other sharks.

At the bottom of the stairs were two machines called ozone neutralizers, which Mr. Chan said the company had leased for two hundred dollars a month in order to improve the smell. Beyond the ozone neutralizers were the processing chambers. Mr. Chan inhaled the foul air deeply and smiled. "No smell," he said. "See? No smell."



"Message: I care."

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Country Person

Doug Stevens likes to refer to his group, the Outband, as "the only gay and lesbian country band in the world." Though there are, of course, other gay and lesbian country performers, what he means is that his group is the first to play country music that "gay people don't have to translate." Mr. Stevens explains, "Country songs are almost always love songs about heterosexual relationships. I wanted to play country music for gay people, about gay things—things that we say, the kind of jargon that we use, something that will relate to our subculture."

When we met Mr. Stevens recently, over a cup of coffee at a restaurant near his rehearsal studio, off Times Square, he had L-shaped sideburns and was wearing a Stetson and cowboy boots. He could have been a stand-in for Clint Black, Garth Brooks, or any other country icon. But he confessed that the hat was brand-new and that he was still getting used to walking around in boots. He grew up in rural Mississippi, he said, and used to want nothing more keenly than to escape his roots. "I was trying forever not to be a country person," he said. "I mean, my dad and my mom both just went through the seventh grade. They got married when she was fifteen, and she had me when she was sixteen. It's a very country culture, and all my life I've tried not to be of that culture." His father, a bricklayer, and his mother, a factory worker, were both amateur country singers. "They had country music on the radio all day long, and then they played it themselves at night, and so I was just inundated by it. And I hated it as a child. I would listen to rock music—the Beatles and the Monkees and all that stuff. And in the seventies I listened to bands like Yes. And then I got into classical music."

When Mr. Stevens was nineteen, he moved to St. Louis, where he attended college and, afterward, worked as a computer programmer. During ten years there, he sang as a tenor and countertenor with the St. Louis Symphony Chorus. In 1986, he moved to New York to pursue a career in opera. He performed with several singing groups, including the Ensemble for Early Music, with which he toured Europe and Hong Kong. Then, about a year and a half ago, Mr. Stevens tested positive for H.I.V. Shortly thereafter, his boyfriend of five years left him. "This double blow devastated me," he told us. "I'd never felt that kind of emotional pain before. And eventually I couldn't work on classical music anymore. I had no interest in anything, and I turned down a couple of jobs. After about eight months, I decided that this pain had to end somehow. And I remembered, from hearing country singers talk on TV back home in Mississippi, that sometimes it was writing music or singing music that got them through hard times. So I thought, I'm just going to write a song and express what I feel, and see what happens. And what came out was a country song." He paused, then went on, "It made me feel really good, so I wrote another one, and another one, and another one, and then I decided: I'm giving up classical music, I'm doing this."

Last October, Mr. Stevens took out an ad for musicians in the *Village Voice*, and he soon put a band together. The group has had no trouble finding work, both at local clubs and out of town. That country music has lately become something of a rage in gay bars and clubs hasn't hurt, Mr. Stevens said, but he knows of no other band that consciously tries to tailor country music to a gay audience. "When I call up club owners looking for work, I say to them, 'We're the only gay and lesbian country band in the world,'" he told us. "I keep waiting for them to say, 'Wait a minute. I know this other band.' But nobody has. So I'm just going to keep on saying it until somebody refutes me."

Most of Mr. Stevens' songs come out of his own experiences, and when he talks about them he displays a little missionary zeal. "A lot of straight people think that gay people are very different," he said. "Like, I remember my aunt asking, 'Do you fall in love like we do?' It's amazing to me how some straight people think that gay people are from the moon—that we don't have the same emotions, the same feelings. I think these songs will show that we do." Occasionally, Mr. Stevens will "translate" someone else's song. "There was one song I really wanted to sing, by Bessie Smith, called 'The Graveyard Dream Blues,'" he said. "The song is about a woman, but I changed it to a man. He dreams that his man is dead, and he goes to the graveyard and falls down on his knees and asks the gravedigger to give him back his good man. The gravedigger looks him right in the eye and says, 'It's too late, Mister, your man is dead.' And then the man screams, and wakes up and realizes that it was a dream."

We asked Mr. Stevens how his parents felt about his new endeavor. "They're real happy that I'm singing country music," he said. "They never understood classical. I'd take recordings down there—I made a recording of two Bach cantatas on Oiseau-Lyre with Joshua Rifkin—and play them that stuff, and they didn't get it at all. But this they like."

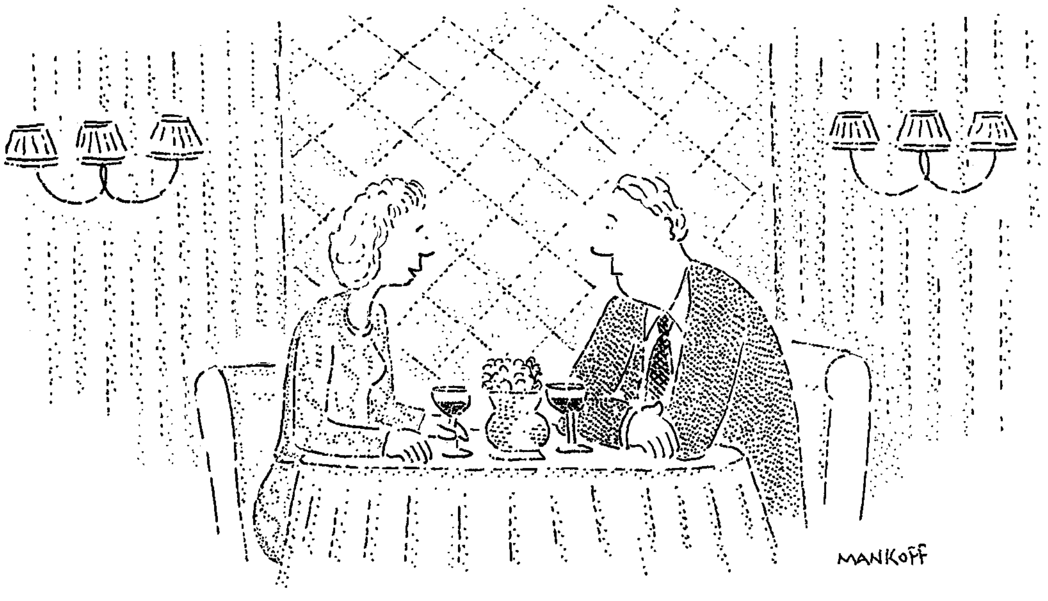
And how does he feel about his conversion?

"After all this emotional stress, I found that the only salvation I had was to really be myself, and that's who I am," he said. "And I was surprised—I'm surprised now, still—to find out that that's who I am. I'm a country person. So I'm just going to be a country person."

The Bubble

WE had been in a serious mood even before we received an invitation to "Beauty: An Art Installation" and a party at the Michel Kazan Townhouse of Beauty. The "temporary aspect of beauty" and "fear of ugliness" would be the party's themes, the invitation said, and it didn't stop there. "Women's breasts will be decorated with slices of cucumber and other parts with other foods," it informed us.

O.K., we admit it, the fear of ugliness creeps into our consciousness from time to time. And remember when not getting run over in New York City was a simple matter of looking both ways before crossing a one-way street? While we were walking to the fear-of-ugliness party at the Michel Kazan Townhouse of Beauty, our well-being was threatened by a man on a bicycle riding



"Trust me, David, he meant nothing—it was just a training marriage."

up from behind us—those bicycle tires are amazingly quiet—on the *sidewalk*. Then two energetic boys on skateboards, also on the sidewalk, one on either side of us, whizzed by like express trains. Still, we persevered.

On the northwest corner of Fifty-fifth and Madison, across the street from the Michel Kazan Townhouse of Beauty, is an outdoor café that belongs to A.T. & T. About twenty-five white tables and a hundred white plastic chairs give the impression of an abandoned garden party. We counted seven men at six tables—men who looked as if they had nowhere else to go. Two blond women, who might have been taking a break from shopping, sat in the café, at a table near the sidewalk. One of them rarely took her hands off the elastic on her thick ponytail, and the other wore her hair in a neat French twist.

The Michel Kazan Townhouse of Beauty used to be the town house of Helena Rubinstein when she was married to Prince Artchil Gourielli. It has six floors, and its exterior, except for the ground floor, which is gray stone, is painted pink. A blue awning in front has the Michel Kazan signature on it.

We walked into the Townhouse, and there we saw many women, paper plates of grocery-store pretzels on the reception desk, and the works of eleven artists displayed on the ground floor. We met Marysia Kazan, the wife of Michel. She is from Poland, and her acquaintance with one of the artists had inspired the installation. "My husband thinks beauty is forever," she told us.

We met some of the artists. Larry Miller, of the Fluxus movement, who makes objects out of grass, said of his medium, "It fades and turns to gold."

We asked the performance artist Stephanie Urdang, who was wearing a long, slinky black dress with spaghetti straps, about her fear of ugliness. "I never thought of it," she told us.

Krzysztof Zarebski, of the Rivington school of sculptors, showed us a huge slab of ice with a big lock of brown hair in it. We asked him where he got the hair, and he said, "It's from my daughter's braid, which I saved. I used to use mine, but it's getting gray."

No breasts were being decorated that we saw. A young blond woman wearing pearls, a very short black skirt, a black sleeveless blouse, black boots, and red lipstick sat on the stairs with slices of carrots on her thighs, though. Mr. Zarebski had tossed artificial fingernails on the stairs behind her. They lay there like confetti. We went upstairs, stepping over them, and found Michel Kazan, who, it turned out, avoids crowds even at his own parties. He was sitting in a brown hairdressing chair on the almost empty second floor. Mr. Kazan, who was born in Perpignan, France, and has lived in New York for forty years, is a small man with very dark hair and a dark mustache. In the history of hair, he is the person who introduced the bouffant, the bubble, the French twist, and the guiches (little spit curls). For the party, he was wearing a navy blazer, a pale-blue shirt, a tie with blue flowers on it, and gray trousers.

"I started more than fifty years ago, in Paris," Mr. Kazan told us. "I had two purposes in life. A cosmetic doctor I wanted to be, but there wasn't enough money. I wanted to make women beautiful without cutting their faces."

"And you invented the bouffant?"

"Yes. In the early sixties, *Vogue* asked me to do something new, something different, something not done, so I did what I call the bouffant, and they got very excited."

We asked Mr. Kazan what he did with hair to make a bouffant.

Mr. Kazan looked serious. "Teasing. You tease the hair coming out from each side." He used his hands to show us. "It's like a pageboy, only much thicker and fuller. It's a bit higher than an ordinary pageboy. Jackie Kennedy wore it for twenty years. It all started thirty years ago at the Metropolitan Museum. Mrs. Paley was there, and Jackie, and—you know the one, 'I want to be alone'—Garbo was there, and Marlene Dietrich. All the society ladies stood in front of paintings of big masters and I made modern styles in front of the masters. It was a very big affair."

"And you also invented the bubble?"

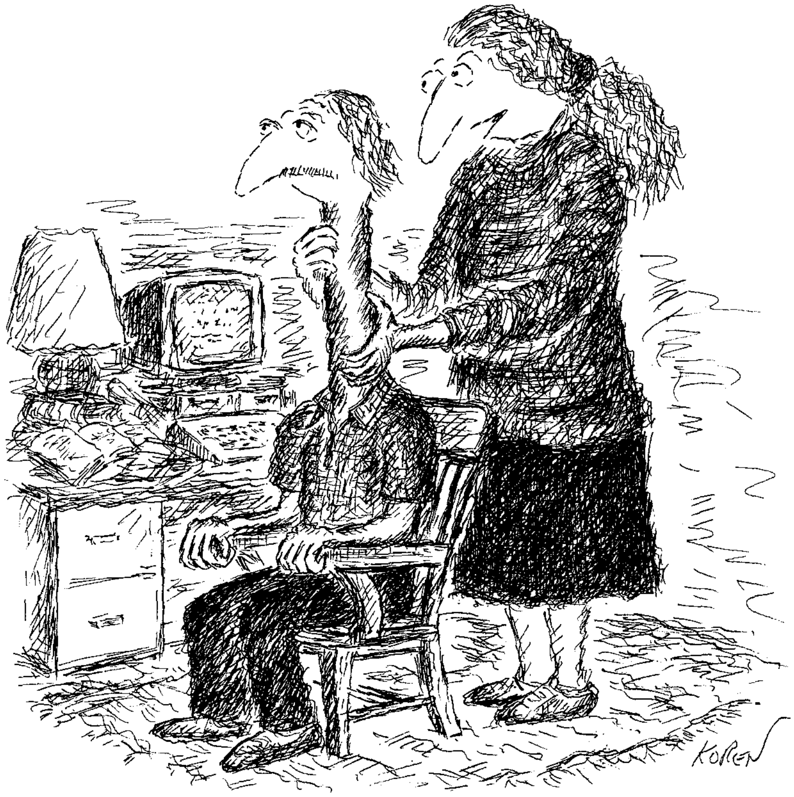
"And now it's outdated completely. The bubble hair was quite successful. And I started the frizzy hair. I got the idea from a Grecian god. I did it for the Galanos collection in L.A."

"How would you describe the bubble?"

"Tight curls all around the head, like bubbles."

"Why did it go out of style?"

"Because all the old ladies are wearing it. Probably, one day this bubble will come back, because it's exciting. All the hairdos go around and around. There's nothing in this world new."



"I feel a lot of tension here."

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SECRETS

MY father died in 1966, from a fall at a construction site where he was working, in Jacksonville, Florida. I was thirteen, and my brothers, Eddie and Lee, were ten and seven. We had just moved from an apartment into a small house near Interstate 95, but our real home was South Bend, Indiana. We had only been in Florida for eight months. Both sets of grandparents wanted us to return to Indiana.

"They think I'm helpless," my mother said, "which makes me angry."

We were in the car on a Sunday night, two weeks after my father's funeral, driving home from the beach. My mother was working as a secretary at my brothers' elementary school, and her friends from work had invited us to a cookout. My mother said the cookout was to cheer us up. But, once her friends had got the fire going, they talked about how sad they felt for us. "What kind of food did your father like?" my mother's friend Grace Nolan asked us.

"Meat," Eddie said, "and not many kinds of vegetables."

Grace Nolan started to cry.

"Well, he liked potatoes, too," Lee told her.

"So," my mother said to us now, in the car, "I told your grandparents we'd be staying here."

"Good," Eddie said, from the back seat. Of the three of us—Eddie and Lee and me—he was the one who had made the most friends.

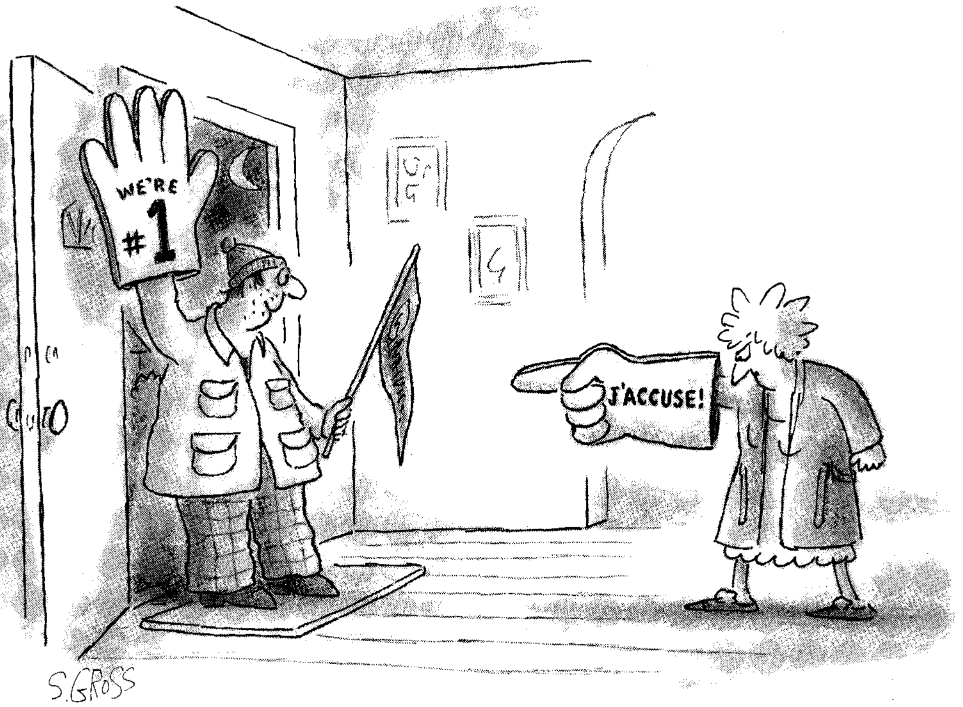
"I'm not sure I want to stay," I told my mother. "Or if Lee does." Lee was asleep, next to Eddie, with his head and shoulders on the seat and the rest of him limp on the floor.

"Lee wants to stay, Jean," my mother said. "I already know that." She pulled up in front of our house. It was ten o'clock, and we had forgotten to leave on any lights.

"Wake up, Lee," my mother said. She got out of the car and opened the back door and gently shook him. Sometimes he slept so soundly that it was impossible to wake him up. He opened his eyes for a moment and looked at the dark house.

"Why isn't Dad home yet?" he asked. My mother picked him up and carried him inside. He and Eddie were small for their ages, whereas I was tall and too heavy. I watched my mother put Lee into bed. Eddie lay down on his own bed, against the opposite wall, and fell asleep with his clothes on.

My mother and I went into the kitchen. Spread out over the table were letters from the construction company my father had worked for, and forms from its insurance company. We were supposed to receive twenty-five thousand dollars, and my mother was planning to use this money to buy the house we were in, which would allow us to live on the salary she made. The problem was that there had been people around, when the accident happened, who said that the fall had been my father's own fault, and not the fault of the construction company. So there was a chance the insurance company might not pay us. My mother was worried about this, and now she sat down at the table and began to fill out the forms.



I went into my room, next to the kitchen, which was really meant to be a small utility room. My father had painted it yellow and put in carpeting for me. I changed into my nightgown and got into bed. Every night since my father died, I had been unable to fall asleep. During the day I didn't cry, and it didn't upset me to hear about things my father had said or done. But as soon as I was almost asleep, memories would come into my mind that made our situation seem real to me. I stayed awake all night, it seemed to me, listening to my mother in the kitchen and to the distant noise of the cars on the highway.

In the morning, my mother made me get up and get ready for school. My brothers and I had stayed home for a week after my father died, and then my mother allowed me to stay home for an additional week. I told her I didn't want to talk to people at school yet, but the truth was also that I had got used to staying home—to being able to wear my nightgown all day if I wanted to, or lie in bed all morning, reading a book. I didn't want to go back to living my life, because my life had started to seem like too much trouble. Each small thing, like brushing my teeth or putting on knee-socks, now made me tired. I felt I had to do fewer things each morning, in order to save energy for some more important thing I might have to do in the afternoon.

After I ate breakfast, I walked to the end of our block and waited for the bus with Nancy Dyer, who was in my class. It was November, and she was wearing a blue corduroy jumper her mother had made. She had brought over my assignments, for the two weeks I had been home, and on the bus we went over them. I made corrections according to the answers she remembered from class. "You did real well," she said when we were finished. "But then, you're smarter than I am to begin with."

"That's not true," I told her. "I just do more homework."

"That's what I mean," she said. She had her eyes on her boyfriend, who was getting on the bus. He was a thin boy, with black hair. He sat in front of us. He ignored her and took out a piece of notebook paper and shot spitballs at a red-haired boy across the aisle.

"He's mad at me all the time now," Nancy whispered. "I don't know why."

She had tears in her eyes, and I looked away and watched the trees flashing past in the window. In the reflection, I could see that three people on the bus were looking at me—the red-haired boy, and two girls in the seat in front of him. When I first got on the bus, one of these girls had said, "There was an announcement in school about your dad."

"I know," I said. "Nancy told me."

"I can't believe that happened to you," she said, and whispered something that I couldn't hear to the other girl. Now, as I turned away from the window and looked across the aisle, the red-haired boy smiled at me and was about to say something when he was hit in the forehead by a spitball.

When we got to school, I went to my locker to put away my sweater, and then I went to science and algebra and history. In each class, the teacher took me aside and talked to me about my father, and two or three other people spoke to me about him as well. The boys, especially, wanted to know exactly what had happened. "Did he step off the beam by accident," one boy asked, "or was there something he tripped over?"

"I think he tripped," I told him.

"Wow," the boy said. "I can just picture that."

During lunch, the group of girls I sat with stopped talking to each other when I walked up. "You can sit here, in the middle," Roberta Price said. Everyone moved over, and Carla Norris unwrapped my straw and put it in my milk. "We wondered when you were coming back," Roberta said. "The principal thought maybe last week."

"I decided to wait until today," I told her. We began to eat. Most of us had bought hot lunches. We all had mothers who were either too busy in the mornings to make us sandwiches or who felt we were old enough now to make them ourselves. Carla was the one exception. Her mother not only made her a sandwich but put a note in with her lunch every day.

"Mary is exceptional—even in the broader context of me."

• •

"Here it is," Carla said. She unfolded a small piece of yellow paper. "Good luck on your geography quiz," she read out loud. "Your father and I are very proud of you." She and everybody else at the table looked down at their food.

"That's better than the one where she told you to wash off your mascara," I said, after a silence.

"It sure is," Roberta said quickly. "That one was sickening."

I had English class afterward, during fourth period. My English teacher, Mr. Thompson, was sitting at his desk when I walked in. I went to my seat and listened to a boy standing next to Mr. Thompson's desk talk to him about commas. "I don't think we need them," the boy said. "Periods are good enough."

Other people were coming into the room, and Mr. Thompson went up to the blackboard and wrote down a sentence from "A Separate Peace." The sentence was, "Perhaps I was stopped by that level of feeling, deeper than thought, which contains the truth." After the bell rang, he stepped back from the board and asked, "What, exactly, does this sentence mean?"

Four people he called on said they didn't know. The fifth person said, "I think it means a feeling you keep to yourself."

"Why wouldn't you want anyone to know?" Mr. Thompson asked.

"Because it's a secret," someone else said.

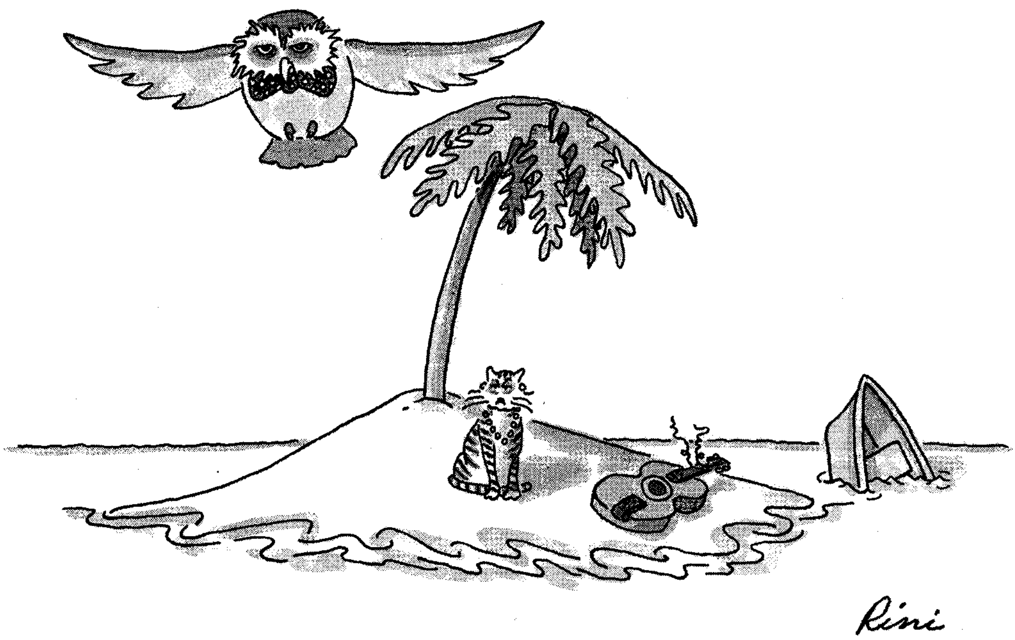
"Maybe it's a secret you keep from yourself," a girl in the back row said. "Maybe people don't want to know their own secrets."

"That doesn't make sense," a boy said.

"A lot of things don't make sense," Mr. Thompson told him, "but they're still true." He gave us an assignment, which we were to do in class, and then he sat on the radiator and watched us work. "Don't forget to use commas," he told us.

After class, I went downstairs to the girls' locker room to change my clothes for gym. Our teacher was already there, marking off our names as we walked in. She talked to me about my father, and then a girl I knew from another class said, "I don't know what I would do if my father died, even though I hate him."

We all went out to the basketball court and shot baskets from the free-throw line. After gym, I went to the library for study hall, and then I met Nancy in front of my locker, and we walked out to the school bus. Her boyfriend, who got on the bus a few



minutes after we did, sat down four rows ahead of us. He spent the whole bus ride talking loudly to a small, blond girl.

"Sometimes people try to hurt you just to see if they can do it," Nancy said.

"You don't know that for sure," I told her.

"Yes, I do," she said. "I've done it to people myself."

We got off at our block and stood for a moment at the corner before we each went home. The air was so still that the traffic from the highway seemed louder than usual. "I guess I don't need to talk to you about feeling sad," Nancy said. "I forgot for a minute."

"It's different with me," I told her. "It's not something you feel every second."

I WALKED across the neighbors' yard and into our own; I put Lee's bike in the shed and went into the house through the kitchen door. My mother was standing in Lee's doorway, and I heard Lee say, "I got an A in spelling. Dad gave me fifty cents last time."

My mother gave Lee two quarters, and then she walked past me into the kitchen, opened the kitchen door, and sat outside on our steps. I went out and sat beside her. "Did Dad really give Lee fifty cents?" she asked me.

"I thought it was a quarter," I told her, "but I might be remembering it wrong." She held my hand, and we watched a squirrel race around the shed.

"Would you give me a hug, honey?" she asked. I put my arms around her. In the past year, I had grown a lot, and now I was bigger than she was; when I hugged her, I was able to put my arms all the way around her.

"I wish I'd stop growing," I told her.

"You'll be tall, like Dad was," she said. "Someday you'll appreciate it." She stood up and walked down into the yard. She was still dressed in her work clothes—a skirt and blouse and high heels—and her shoes were invisible in the long grass. No one had mowed the yard since my father had died. "The lawn will have to be Eddie's job now," my mother said. "You and Lee can do the raking." She looked up toward the clatter of a woodpecker in our sweetgum tree. "I'll find a gas station that will change the oil in the car, and then I'll teach myself to do the other things Dad did."

"That seems like a lot," I told her.

"I know it does, honey." She sat back down beside me and pulled up weeds that were growing out of the cracks in the steps. I looked around at the yard and the house—at the patches of bare ground under the trees, the peeling paint around the windows, and all the small holes in the screens—and thought that it would take an army of men to fix everything that was broken.

My mother and I went inside to peel potatoes. At six o'clock, when Eddie came home from playing football with his friends, we all had supper in the kitchen.

"I made a touchdown today," Eddie said.

"Well, good for you," my mother said. "I wish I could have seen it." She had eaten quickly, and she put her plate in the sink and drank a cup of instant coffee while she watched us finish.

Afterward, I cleared the table and washed the dishes. I forgot that it was Eddie's turn, and he didn't remind me until I was done. He and Lee were sitting on the floor in the living room, with Lee's toy soldiers all around them. They were watching television with my mother. I came into the room and said, "I don't feel like watching TV."

"Who cares?" Eddie asked.

"We all care," my mother said sharply. "We're a family, even without Dad. We care what happens to each other." The way she spoke and the look on her face reminded me of my father, of the times he'd lost his temper with us. Eddie and Lee looked surprised, and then, a second later, there were tears on their faces.

I was crying, too, because my mother had started to cry. But I wasn't upset about what Eddie had said or because my mother had got angry. I startled myself by feeling almost glad. It seemed to me that all of a sudden our lives were ordinary again, except that my father wasn't there, and I felt like I was paying attention after being lost in a daydream, or like I was opening my eyes after seeing how long I could keep them closed. When my mother started to speak, I hoped she wouldn't say something nice that would cancel out her angry words. But what she said was, "O.K. Pick up these toys. Then we're going to turn off the television and go to bed."

It was only seven-thirty, but we went into our rooms. I didn't bother to put on my nightgown. I took off my clothes and got into bed in my underwear, and, even though it was early, I didn't have my same trouble falling asleep. I knew now that my father was dead and that we would live our lives without him, and I fell asleep right away, so that for a while I could not know these things.

—Judy Troy

THE MUSICAL HUSBANDS

THE musical husbands buy Monster cable for their speakers, because they are sure that it increases the midrange response. They listen to the speakers as soon as they have attached the new cables—even before they have pushed the speakers back up against the wall—hoping to hear all the new, warm alto tones. They take the fabric screens off the speakers to expose the woofers and tweeters. Then they put the screens back on. They have read about the midrange in their audio magazines. If the midrange is full, soprano voices are, it seems, "burnished" and "honeyed," rather than just high and piercing; in the midrange, music "swells expressively," and strings have an "ambient glow."

"It's the test of the musicality of your system," their audiophile friends explain. "You've got the flutes and harps in the tweeter, and the bass sounds in the woofer. The test of your system is how well you can get all the tones that lie in between. When you have good midrange response, all the music just seems to be flowing together. It's mostly a consequence of how good the system is at reproducing ambient sound—room tone that you can't really hear as music but that's all *around* the music. It's a mysterious thing. Some cheap systems can be rich in midrange response, and some people can spend ten thousand dollars and still not have it." The musical husbands believe passionately that they will find the midrange someday—they will put together the perfect arrangement of cables and find the right place for the speakers, and there it will be—the midrange, rising like an apparition above the stereo cabinet.

Searching for the midrange, the musical husbands pick up their black, undersized speakers and try them in different configurations around the room: on the floor on either side of the stereo cabinet, then up on the windowsill behind the stereo, then one up high, near the window, and one reverberating on the floor—first the left one up and the right one down, then the right one up and the left one down. Their wives watch them from the sofas, where they're reading, and think that the music sounds just about the same as it always has.

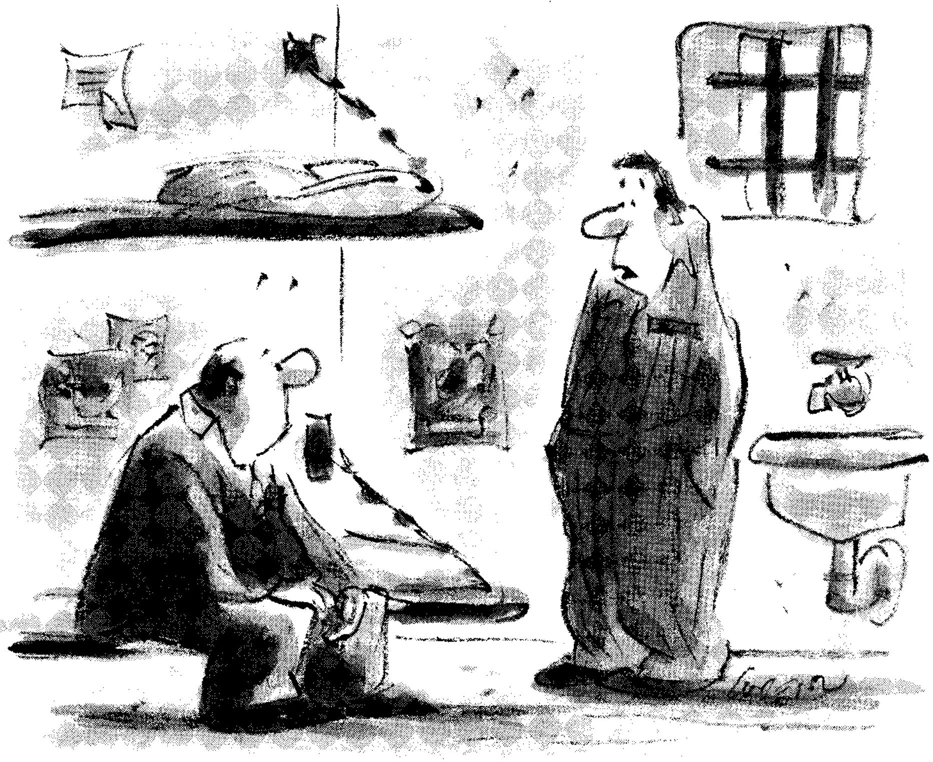
The musical husbands sometimes blame the disappearance of the midrange on the "tyranny of digital sound." (That's a phrase from one of the little audio magazines.) Is digital sound really as smooth and as lacquered as they had once been promised? Or is it just cold and rote and clinical? Sometimes the musical husbands slip a CD into the player and are sure that it is giving them a headache. Too cold, too cold. "Doesn't it sound harsh—sort of *glaring*—to you?" one may call out to his wife, who then appears at the door of the living room with a thumb discreetly placed inside her book.

She cocks her head. "Oh, listen! You can hear the maracas," she says encouragingly as "Beatles For Sale" plays.

"Yeah! That's the problem!" the musical husband cries in agitation. "The incidental percussion shouldn't have that kind of clarity!" She listens for the overinsistent maracas, the too bright tambourines, and then tries to look pained, too.

The musical husbands are convinced that the sound of music has changed since they were children. They can remember hearing the third movement of Beethoven's Ninth at the end of the old Huntley-Brinkley report—it was their first musical experience: the anonymous orchestra catching fire, alight with indignation at the state of the world that evening. Now, though, when the musical husbands hear Beethoven, even at Carnegie Hall, it sounds too *distinct*. The timpani pound brightly; the strings scratch away; you can pick out the horns—everyone is playing his part. That sense of an orchestra fused into one single, scowling emotion—you don't hear that anymore. Perhaps the midrange has simply vanished from the world.

WHO are the musical husbands? They are men for whom the love of music supplies more jumpiness than it does serenity. Music creates for them a cycle of appetites and worries, itches and anxieties. They can be seen in Tower Records on Friday nights, travelling between the pop and the jazz and the classical sections, a long CD package in either hand—Ella and Handel—trying to discipline themselves to buy only one. They are seized by sudden enthusiasms—*needs*—for all the music of a particular musician. And yet even as they place today's CD inside the player, they are already thinking about tomorrow's. In the space of a week, they buy all the records of Lester



"And then one day I decided that not taking risks was the greatest risk of all."

Young; then they lie awake, as their wives read, thinking that once again they have deluded themselves—that it was not the swoopiness of Lester Young they really desired but the breathiness of Ben Webster. The musical husbands do love music. They turn on their stereos first thing in the morning and end the day by listening with their headphones at night. But they worry about music, too. When the musical husbands stand on the main floor of Tower, *they think that everyone else* has a single purpose; everyone else in the store knows just what section to head for. The musical husbands stand in the center of the aisle and look all around: across the floor at the old rock records, and down the aisle at the pop singles, and then they lift their heads toward the classical section upstairs. They have been like this since they were teen-agers, when they would see the ads for the Columbia Record Club in *TV Guide;* just looking at the order forms, where you were expected to check off your "favorite music" (Country and Western, Classical, Broadway, even Teen Hits), made them feel sick. How could you choose?

Now they try to be surer about music, but they are still mercurial from day to day. "I just can't stand to listen to classical quartets when they aren't played on original instruments," they will declare. Then the next day someone will give them a reissue of a Hungarian quartet playing Schumann, recorded in 1956, and that will become their new favorite. They try to console themselves by producing their own tapes, alternating selections from the record collections that they have been assembling since they were twelve with tracks from the new compact-disk reissues. These juxtapositions, they feel, illustrate important musical points. They place gut-string performances of the Haydn string quartets alongside the Quartetto Italiano's performance of the same material, movement by movement. Or they produce scholarly tapes of popular music for their friends. "The Birth of Heavy Metal," for instance—a compilation that pairs American Delta and Chicago Blues material with its English-working-class interpretations. The selections are written out in thin felt pen on the white, ruled cardboard insert of the tape boxes: Robert Johnson's "Crossroads Blues" (1936), and then Cream's "Crossroads" (live, 1968); Howlin' Wolf's "The Red Rooster" (1961), and then the Stones' "Little Red Rooster" (1965).

A SHAVE BY THE GANGES

Sleepwalking from one ghat to the next,
I came to the place where the barbers
all hunkered down, their bony knees akimbo,
dhotis bunched around their loins like diapers,
the tools of their trade laid out on burlap mats:
straight razors, scissors, combs, battered brass bowls.

Not once in my life had I been shaved by a barber,
but I sat down then to wait my turn.
I'd come this far, I'd just seen a foot
twisting up like a flag from a cremation,
I wanted to be shaved in that holy city
as if I were part of a daily ritual.

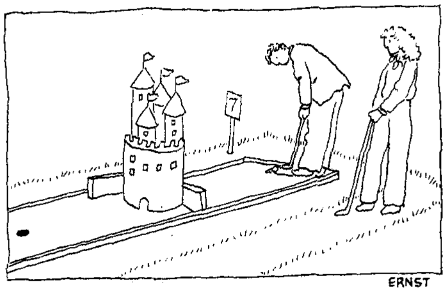
So I was happy to pay my two rupees
and surrender my face to those dark skilled hands
that slapped the foam on with a shaving brush
and worked the razor quickly across my cheek.
Sitting there as he turned my head this way
and that, I saw the crowds of bathers

in the river below, the temple stupas
looming overhead, as if about to fall,
a skeletal umbrella, a legless beggar
lolling on a dolly—all at angles odd enough
to make me see them finally, and feel
the rusty razor's edge against my throat.

—JEFFREY HARRISON

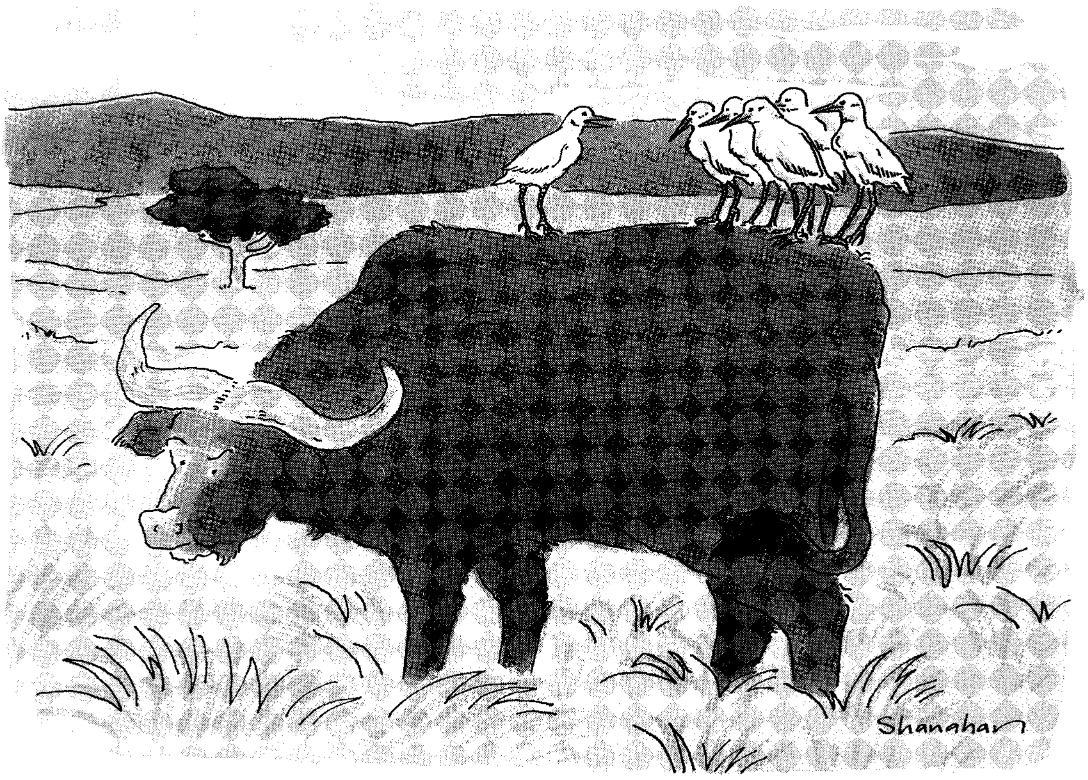
• •

THE musical husbands are nothing like their best friends, the married musicians. The married musicians once really were musicians. They played in bluegrass bands around Cape Cod one summer, or had two years at Juilliard, or wrote satirical songs for the college revue. They are casual about recorded music; often they still use the record-player they had back then or else they actually own a boom box—a ghetto blaster like the kids in the park have—and take it with them to the office, on vacation, or out to the country. They keep beautiful instruments in their apartments—handmade f-hole guitars, or Bechstein baby grands.



The musical husbands are also different from the High End Enthusiasts, with their "reference" records of the twenty-four hours of Le Mans and their speakers shaped like airplane wings; from the Serious Listeners, with their bookshelves full of early-twentieth-century recordings from La Scala; from the Focussed Collectors, with their six versions of "Show Boat"; from the Music Lovers, who are lusty rather than furtive in their musicality, and are full of musical gusto and musical wisecracks ("You call that bel canto? I call it can-belt-o!"); from the Musical Bachelors, who have Sony components and actually buy Harry Connick records; and from their own, moderately musical children, who sit in the middle of the living room, listening to Billy Joel on the Walkman, the music passing right through them, like juice.

Above all, the musical husbands are different from their musical fathers. The musical fathers never thought much about sound, for they still had



"As president of the tenants' association, I have to inform you that our list of grievances has been eaten."

• •

musical worlds to conquer. There was so much unheard music left for them to discover. The musical fathers subscribed to the Musical Heritage Society, and every month received a single white album with blue lettering, no pictures or liner notes; each presented a new Baroque composer, a "discovery"—Telemann and C. P. E. Bach and Vivaldi, back when Vivaldi was still something. They were in revolt against Romantic music and planted their flag on two fronts at once, moving into sixteenth-century Italy and early-twentieth-century Vienna simultaneously: they heard the first "authentic" recordings of Palestrina with the same pleasure they had taken in hearing the dissonances of Webern. They took their music seriously, were prepared to banish Tchaikovsky or canonize Gesualdo. The musical fathers loved boxed sets of records—the heft of them, their impressive taped bindings—and when their sons reached their early teens, they would give them boxed sets at Christmas. To have something in a boxed set (the symphonies of Beethoven; the motets of Schütz; Bach's St. Matthew Passion) was to *possess* it—to have turned the waves of musical history into an object as solid as a doorstop.

Not that the musical fathers were musical snobs. They loved Jimmy Durante singing "Inka Dinka Doo," for instance, or the lyrics to the Peggy Lee hit "Mañana": "Oh, the window she is broken, and the rain is coming in," they would sing to their sons, with comic bravura. The musical fathers took positions and held them. They had the same seats at the symphony every Saturday night for twenty years, and then went to chamber-music concerts the next afternoon. Old soldiers in the musical wars, they recounted musical adventures to their sons. "When I saw how Toscanini had the Philadelphia horns laid out, I knew that we were in for trouble," they said. Yet many of their musical adventures seemed filled with gaiety. Sometimes, they would recall, they could get silly at concerts, listening to the Chopin "Funeral March" played too slow, for example, and then laughing so much that the ushers threw them out of the hall.

When the musical husbands think about their musical fathers, what they hear is not music but a rustle, as a father slips his record out of the paper-and-plastic inner wrapper; his decisive little pant as he blows the dust from the needle; the click of the record being placed on the record changer; the dull plop as it falls (a thrilling but oddly sinister sound, like a trapdoor being dropped open on a scaffold), and then the pause as the needle works its way across the first smooth, uninscribed eighth inch of vinyl; and finally—in the almost indescribably brief and exciting fraction of a second before the music actually begins—the hiss and pop of surface noise that precedes the orchestra, the sound of musical dust.

The musical husbands have come to believe that it was these sounds, more than any others—the sequential plop of the heavy records, and then the microsecond of fuzz—that gave their fathers ease and security in the presence of music. Sound didn't assault their fathers, didn't jump them from behind. They began to hum before the music began, and they would sometimes break their musical routines by putting on a "comedy album"—Bob Newhart, or Nichols and May, or Mel Brooks and Carl Reiner—and they would start laughing before the first high-pitched, nervous, night-club sounds broke through the static. The musical husbands don't know anybody who listens to comedy CDs, and they think this means something. Digital sound can never be funny: imagine an antic comedian's voice suddenly breaking through, without preparation, deep and amusing and surrounded by perfect silence, as though by a black border.

ARE the musical husbands really musical at all? The possibility that they are not worries them. Sometimes they think, The midrange has been there all along, but I cannot hear it. They know in their hearts that they don't really like concerts. They drag their wives to concerts, but the wives sense that the husbands are not really happy there. They sit on their coats, fighting off the sleepiness from the big Indian or Chinese meal; they're always overheated, and there's nothing to look at except the grandiose, unconvincing biographies in *Stagebill* ("Over the last ten years, Eleanor Hemidemisemiquaver has become one of the harpsichordists most widely in demand for concerts and recordings.") And in jazz clubs the sound is no good. The drums drown out the piano, the bass player has a pickup. The musical husbands would rather be at home.

They can hardly believe it now, but there was a time, back when the musical husbands were in high school, when they went to rock concerts all the time. Jethro Tull, Procol Harum, Yes. Though they still love their Beatles records, the musical husbands realize now that as a sonic arrangement, rock is without body. "It's all high notes, like a siren, and low, like a thump, with nothing in between," they announce to their wives. What they don't say is that they worry that the midrange may have atrophied in their heads from neglect. Maybe the fault is not in their speakers, or their cables, or their amplifiers; it is within themselves. All those neurons and nerve endings, shrivelled up—all their midrange software wiped out—from underuse in adolescence.

This current of self-reproach and hopelessness makes it dangerous to bring the musical husbands together. Sometimes they can be kind and helpful to one another. They visit one another on Saturday afternoons, to examine new recordings and old speakers. They tweak one another's CDs, placing rubber rings, like prophylactics, around the edges of the silver disks. (They have convinced themselves that this deepens and widens the sound.) They spray Armor All on the disks, to diminish their metallic harshness, and listen to each other's favorite passages. You see them sometimes in Tower, rummaging through the sale bins and sharing their enthusiasms, the whole universe of music stretching out around them.

But on other occasions it's dangerous to seat two musical husbands beside each other. They can get into an argument in the middle of dinner about nothing at all—about Monster cable, for instance.

"Are you one of those guys who believe in Monster cable?" one will taunt the other, who has just finished explaining about the new disposition of his speakers.

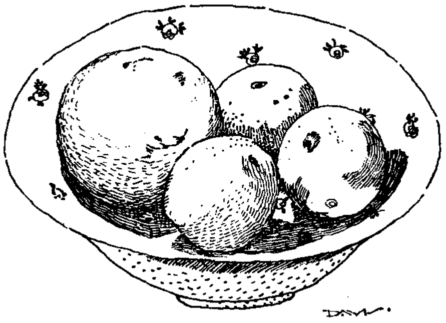
"It makes a difference. I can hear the difference," the other says, stubbornly.

"Sometime I'll have to show you how electrons work. I guess you think the electrons need to be warm or something. You believe in Monster cable. I believe in physics," the friend says. "The electrons don't need to be warm or anything."

The other musical husband is so angry that he addresses his next remarks to his wife. "This guy is too ignorant to talk to. There is a difference, and everyone who listens seriously, anyone who has an ear, can tell."

"It's just about how people listen to their *records*," she cries, exasperated. She cannot even look at the other wife, for this is not just another bit of funny, forgivable masculine absurdity; it is deeper and more shaming than that. Meanwhile, her husband's heart is broken: she has reduced him to a hobbyist, a hi-fi enthusiast, a *nerd*. Later, at home, the couple have a fight and the musical husband says, in the end, "You're just tone-deaf. You don't know how to listen. You hate music."

ARE the musical husbands basically husbands, and only musical on the side? Or is it the other way around? It's certainly true that the longer they are married the more musical they become. At the same time, they enjoy acting the part of husband. "She keeps me on a short leash," one will say ruefully to another when he is considering some musical purchase. "Yeah. Me, too," the other musical husband will say. "We made an agreement—one CD a week. But I think this leaves me a loophole for LPs. I'll stick them behind the sofa cushions." They never feel so happily husbandlike, in fact, as when they are buying music in secret.



And yet, although they pretend to enjoy their wives' tolerant indifference, their deepest fear is that their wives *were* musical once, with their teen-aged musical lovers. Although the wives tend to greet their husbands' anxious, eager demands for musical attention with a few rote responses ("It's lovely," "How beautiful," or just a long, perfunctory "Mmm"), sometimes in a department store or a coffee shop, especially around Christmas, a musical husband will notice a funny look crossing his wife's face when certain songs come on. (Not good songs, usually: "So Far Away," by Carole King, or even, God forgive her, "Stairway to Heaven.")

"Why are you smiling that way?" he'll ask.

"No reason."

"It made you think of something."

"Nothing." But she *is* smiling, to herself. Often the music that makes her smile most (and it is not the smile she reserves for new friends or people he wants her to impress, but another, inward-looking smile) is alarmingly lengthy stuff—the first side of "What's Going On," or even "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida." Sometimes they make love with music playing, but when they do the rhythm of the lovemaking never seems to give way to the swell of ambient sound that he imagines his wife once knew. Even sex has been digitized.

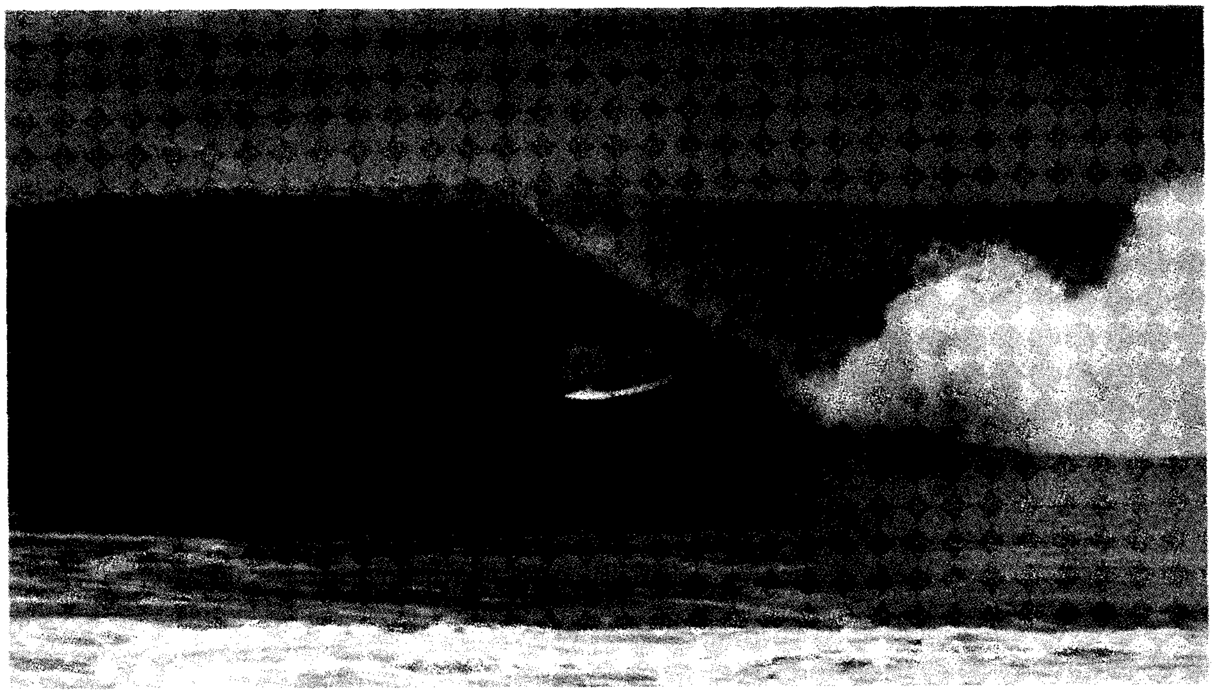
After he has been away for a few days, the musical husband becomes a musical Othello, and searches his stacks of recorded music to find out what his wife has been listening to while he was away. Usually, it turns out that what she has been listening to is sad songs from the fifties, before they were born. He notices that often, even while he is playing records, she is singing to herself. Sometimes, between tracks, he will look up and listen to her sing. She sings in a high-pitched, child's vibrato, and he can never quite make out the tune. "Crazy," it sounds like, or "I Should Care."

"What are you singing, my love?" he asks her, suddenly and (he thinks) tenderly. But she can hear the anxiety and suspicion and mistrust—all the incidental percussion—in his question. So she says only, and almost to herself, "Oh, just a song."

—Adam Gopnik

THE SPORTING SCENE

PLAYING DOC'S GAMES—II



Greg Raymond / Beach Photos

William Finnegan at Noriega

IT was a shining February afternoon. The tide was low, and Ocean Beach, a four-mile-long north-south strip that accounts for nearly all of San Francisco's seafront and is normally narrow and deserted, was wide and full of people. I stutter-stepped down the bank at the foot of Sloat Boulevard, surfboard in hand, and hurried across the sand. Off to my left, two young black men in 49ers warmup jackets were silently putting a pair of miniature remote-control dune buggies through their paces; they wove and whirled and fishtailed in the sand. Off to my right, a group of white people were beating the hell out of pillows with yellow plastic clubs. As I passed, I could hear screaming and cursing: "Bitch! Bitch!" "Get out of this house!" Some people were weeping. They were also kicking the pillows around on the sand. A chubby man in his forties was pounding a sheet of paper laid on a pillow. When it flew off, he chased it down, bellowing, "Get back on there, you bitch!" Near the water's edge, I found another middle-aged man, gazing out to sea, his yellow club at his feet, a beatific expression on his face. He eyed my board as I knelt to strap on an ankle leash. I asked about the pillow-beaters, and he said they were engaged in something called the Pacific Process. Thirteen weeks, three thousand dollars. This exercise, he said, was called Bitching at Mom. I noticed he was wearing work gloves. Hey, no use getting blisters while beating the bejeezus out of Mom.

It was the third day of a solid west swell. Winter is the prime season for surfing Ocean Beach—it's when the biggest waves and the cleanest conditions (little or no wind, orderly sandbars) coincide—but this joyful conjunction usually falls apart in early February, so each good day now was gravy. Conditions this afternoon were superb: six-foot waves, not a breath of wind. Unfortunately, the prolonged season had brought out unprecedented crowds, and half the surfers in Northern California seemed to be on hand. Ocean Beach didn't normally suffer from the overpopulation that spoils most California surf spots. There were only a few dozen local surfers, and visitors were rare. My theory was that surfers from nearby towns and cities didn't *want* to know about Ocean Beach, because, while it sometimes got great waves, it was just as often ferociously intimidating. But crowds of sixty or more had become common in the last couple of weeks. It was as if a whole layer of the regional surf population had decided that, with the major winter swells probably over and conditions still improbably clean, Ocean Beach could be safely raided. I understood this selective bravado, because I felt it, too, along with an immense relief at having survived another winter—this was my third—of surfing Ocean Beach. Still, I resented the horde whose spidery silhouettes I could barely see, gliding and thrashing in the glare beyond the shore break, as I prepared to paddle out.

The water was atrociously cold. I could feel it tracing the seams in my wetsuit as I danced through the shallows; my hands throbbed when I started paddling. The first wall of sandy, grumbling white water felt like a barrel of gritty ice cubes poured down my back. I gasped, and kept churning toward what looked like a channel—a passage where fewer waves broke. At this tide, the waves near shore had little power, and I made steady progress. But I still had to cross the inside sandbar—a shallow ridge about halfway between the shore and the outermost surf—where unridable waves broke with pulverizing force. The first wave I saw break on the bar as I approached looked as if a string of land mines had exploded inside it. Sunlight splintered in long shards behind a curtain of falling water, then blew through the wall like a million grains of glass. An instant later, there was nothing but angry foam. I could see no channel. My progress stopped. For a couple of minutes, the waves and I quietly banged heads. Then came a lull: no waves. I sprint-paddled straight at the bar. A thick, glistening wave made a delayed appearance, but I got to the bar before it did, and hurled myself with an involuntary cry through its harmless, shiny, icy crest.

Beyond the inside bar, in the deep-water trough that separated it from the outside bar, scores of people came suddenly into view. They were scattered for two hundred yards in each direction: sitting in clumps far outside, scrambling for waves, scratching to get back out. Two or three were actually on their feet, riding waves. All had passed the snarling mastiff of the inside bar—the price of admission to this green-gold world of glassy low-tide peaks. The channels through the outside bar looked wide and easy to read. I angled north, toward a field of open water. Slightly farther north, a surfer I didn't recognize, riding a needle-nosed pale-blue board, caught a good-sized wave. He fought to keep his balance as the wave, which was about twice his height, jacked and began to pitch. He didn't fall, but he lost speed in the struggle to keep his feet, and his first turn, now deep in the wave's shadow, was weak. If the wave hadn't hit a patch of deep water, and paused for a beat, he would have been buried by the first section. He managed to steer around it, though, and then pull into the next section and set a high line across a long green wall. By the time he passed me, he was in full command, perhaps one turn from the end of an excellent ride. But his face, I saw in the moment he shot past, was twisted with anguish, and with something that looked like rage.

Riding a serious wave is for an accomplished surfer what playing, say, Chopin's Polonaise in F-Sharp Minor might be for an accomplished pianist. Intense technical concentration is essential, but many less selfless emotions also crowd around. Even in unchallenging waves, the faces of surfers as they ride become terrible masks of fear, frustration, anger. The most revealing moment is the pullout, the end of a ride, which usually provokes a mixed grimace of relief, distress, elation, and dissatisfaction. The assumption, common among non-surfers, that riding waves is a slaphappy, lighthearted business—fun in the sun—is for the most part mistaken. The face of the stranger on the pale-blue board had reminded me, in fact, of nothing so much as the weeping, contorted faces of the pillow-beaters on the beach.

I slipped between the big, shifting peaks of the outside bar and arrived at the takeoff area, known as the lineup. I half knew a few of the people I could see there, but the crowd seemed amorphous, unfocussed—there were no conversations in progress. Everyone seemed intent on the waves, on himself. I caught my breath, chose a lineup marker—a school bus parked in the Sloat lot—and went to work. It was important, especially in a strange crowd, to make a good showing on one's first waves, for they established one's place in the pecking order. Blowing a takeoff or failing to catch a catchable wave usually sent one to the end of the queue for waves; this was an improvised but fierce arrangement, and in an aggressive crowd where waves were scarce one could easily be stuck there for the duration. I moved to a spot about fifteen yards inside a group of four or five surfers—a risky position, vulnerable to a big set, or series of waves, breaking farther out, but I was fit after a winter of paddling, and had the advantage of knowing the bars off this part of Ocean Beach. And, as it happened, the next wave to come through held up nicely, shrugging off the efforts of two guys farther out to catch it, and handing me a swift, swooping, surefooted first ride.

Paddling back out, I burned to tell somebody about the wave—about the great *crack* the lip had made as it split the surface behind me, about the mottled amber upper hollows of the inside wall. But there was no one to tell. A surf crowd is a delicate social unit. Everyone out there is starring in his own movie, and permission is required before you inflict your exploits on anyone else. Vocal instant replays and noisy exultation are not unknown, but they're subject to a strict code of collective ego control. Young kids sometimes misunderstand this part of the surfing social contract, and brag and browbeat each other in the water, but they generally cool it when older surfers are in earshot. The usual crowd at Ocean Beach was older than most—in fact, I couldn't remember ever seeing a teen-ager out on a big day—and the unwritten limits on garrulity among strangers there were correspondingly firm. Those who exceeded them were shunned. Those who consistently exceeded them were hated, for they failed to respect the powerfully self-enclosed quality of what other surfers, especially the less garrulous, were doing out there—the emotions that many of them were surfing through.

Two black grebes popped out of the foam beside me, their spindly necks like feathered periscopes, their big, surprised eyes staring. I murmured, "Did *you* see my wave?"

I headed for an empty peak slightly north of the school bus. I caught two quick waves there, and

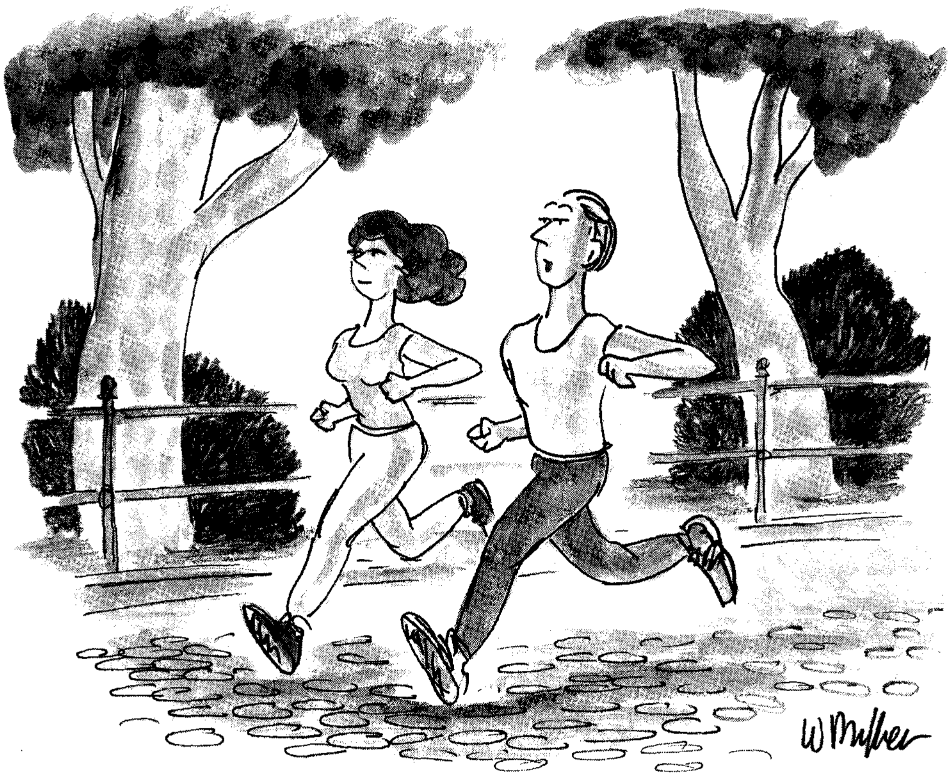
me and my sweetie

half a dozen people saw fit to join me. The jockeying for waves got, for Ocean Beach, fairly bad. Nobody spoke. Each dreamer stayed deep in his own dream—hustling, feinting, gliding, windmilling into every possible wave. Then a cleanup set rolled through, breaking fifty yards outside the bar we were surfing. Huge walls of white water swatted all of us off our boards, pushing a few unlucky souls clear across the inside bar. The group that reconvened a few minutes later was smaller, and now had something to talk about. "My leash leg just got six inches longer." "Those waves looked like *December*." We settled into a rough rotation. Waves were given and taken, and givers were sometimes even thanked. After noteworthy rides, compliments were muttered. The chances of this swell's lasting another day were discussed in general session. A burly Asian from Marin County was pessimistic—"It's a three-day west. We get 'em every year." He repeated his prediction, then said it again for those who might have missed it. The little group at the school-bus peak, while it would never be known for its repartee, had achieved some rude coherence. A delicate fabric of shared enterprise had settled over all of us out there, and I found that my resentment of the non-locals had faded. The tide, which was now rising, was unanimously blamed for a lengthy lull. The sun, nearing the horizon, ignited a fiery Z of sea-facing windows along a road that switchbacked up a distant San Francisco hillside.

Then a familiar howl and raucous laugh rose from the inside bar. Heads turned. "Doc," someone said, unnecessarily. It was Dr. Mark Renneker, on his rounds. Doc Hazard, as he was sometimes called, was the one San Francisco surfer whom non-locals were likely to know. His fame derived mainly from his exploits in giant Ocean Beach surf, but he was hard to miss in waves of any size. He was paddling alongside somebody I didn't know, regaling him with the plot of a horror movie: "So the head starts running around by itself, biting people to death." Before they reached the lineup, Mark interrupted himself, swerved, sprint-paddled north, wheeled, and picked off a wave that had somehow slipped past the rest of us. Ten minutes later, I saw him steaming in my direction again. There was, it struck me, a gawkiness about Mark; today, for instance, he was wearing an absurd-looking short-billed neoprene hood, with his beard jutting over the chin strap and his ponytail flopping out the back. But when Mark was on a surfboard his gawkiness was completely obscured by the power and precision of his movements. He paddled like a Grand Prix racer, always poised for agile cornering and breathtaking accelerations. Mark was six feet four but rode boards as short as six feet—a sign of rare strength and confidence. I watched him bearing down on me. When he was still ten yards away, he made a face and yelled, "This is a zoo!" I wondered what the people around us made of that observation. "Let's go surf Santiago," he said.

Mark didn't recognize the unwritten limits on garrulity in the water. He tore up the surfing social contract and blew his great, sunburned nose on the tatters. And he was too big, too witty, and far too fearless for anyone to object. Feeling compromised, I reluctantly abandoned my spot in the rotation at the school-bus peak and set off with Mark for the peaks breaking near the base of Santiago Street, half a mile north. " 'A three-day west'!" Mark snorted. "Who *are* these guys? It's going to be *bigger* tomorrow. All the indicators say so." An amateur meteorologist, Mark diligently monitored weather and buoy reports from the North Pacific, and he was usually right about what the surf would do. He was wrong about Santiago, though. The bars, we saw as we approached, were plainly sloppier than those we had left behind at Sloat. There was nobody surfing anywhere nearby. That was why Mark wanted to surf there, of course.

It was an old disagreement between us. Mark believed that crowds were stupid. "People are sheep," he liked to say. And he often claimed to know more than the crowd did about where and when to surf. He would head down the beach to some unlikely-looking spot and stubbornly stay there, riding marginal, inconsistent waves, rather than grub it out with the masses. I had spent a lifetime paddling hopefully off toward uncrowded peaks myself, dreaming that they were about to start working better than the popular



"It's hard for me to tell if my father's having been in the delivery room when I was born is a real factor in my over-all sense of well-being."

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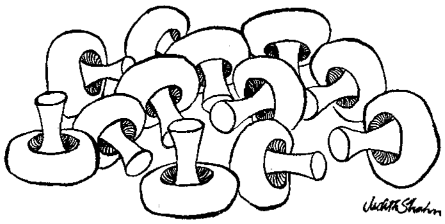
break, and sometimes—rarely, briefly—they actually seemed to do so. But I had a rueful faith in the basic good judgment of the herd. Crowds collected where the waves were best. This attitude drove Mark nuts. And Ocean Beach, with its great uncrowded winter waves, did in fact bend the universal Malthusian surf equation. Freezing water and abject fear and ungodly punishment were helpful that way.

A block or so before we reached Santiago, I took off, over Mark's objections, on a midsized wave, a detour that I quickly regretted: the set behind my wave gave me a thorough drubbing, almost driving me over the inside bar. By the time I got back outside, the sun was setting, I was shivering, and Mark was a hundred yards farther north. I decided not to follow him. I would see him later; there was going to be a slide show at his apartment that evening. Now shivering badly, I started looking for a last wave. But the peaks along here were shifty, and I kept misjudging their speed and steepness. I nearly got sucked over backward by a vicious, ledging wave, then had to scramble to avoid a monstrous set.

The twilight deepened. The spray lifting off the wave tops still had a crimson sunset tinge, but the waves themselves were now just big, featureless blue-black walls. They were getting more and more difficult to judge. There were no longer any other surfers in sight. I was ready to try to paddle in—an ignominious maneuver. And, when a lull came, that's what I did, digging hard, struggling to keep my board pointed shoreward through the crosscurrents of the outside bar, using a campfire on the beach as a visual fix, and glancing back over my shoulder every five or six strokes.

I was about halfway to shore, coming up on the inside bar, when a set appeared outside. I was safely in deep water, and there was no sense trying to cross the inside bar during a set, so I turned and sat up to wait. Against the still bright sky, at the top of a massive wave off to the south and far, far outside, a lithe silhouette leaped to its feet, then plunged into darkness. I strained to see what happened next, but the wave disappeared behind others, nearer by. My stomach had done a flutter kick at the sight of someone dropping into such a wave at dusk, and as I bobbed over the swells gathering themselves for the assault on the inside bar I kept peering toward where he had vanished, watching for a riderless board washing in. That wave had looked like a leash-breaker. Finally, less than forty yards away, a dim figure appeared, speeding across a ragged inside wall. Whoever it was had not only made the drop but was still on his feet, and *flying*. As the wave hit deep water, he leaned into a huge, elegant carving cutback. The cutback told me who it was. Bill Bergerson, known around Ocean Beach as Peewee, was the only local surfer who could turn like that. He made one more turn, driving to within a few yards of me, and pulled out. His expression, I saw, was bland. He nodded at me but said nothing. I felt tongue-tied. I was relieved, though, by the thought of having company for the passage across the inside bar, which was now detonating continuously. But Peewee had other plans. He turned and, without a word, started paddling back out to sea.



UNDERTAKINGS

Though "a spindle shanked withered virgin"
  (my source is Virginia Woolf),
Rose Macaulay was right about ruins;
  perhaps it takes one to know . . .
She said it best in her obvious
  phrase: the *pleasure* of ruins.

We are not aggrieved by the wreckage
  of Selinus; we inspect
the unrestored stanchions of Sayil
  without despair, without dread:
these places reward our intrusion
  by a sense of victory,

partly ours for Being There with them,
  partly theirs for surviving
to greet us. Anything real can give
  human beings pleasure; pain
inheres only in what has not come
  to pass, the unmade event,

as when we read, in Baudelaire's list
  of *petits poèmes en prose*
projected and not written: "Captive
  in a Lighthouse," "Festival
in a Deserted City." . . . Suffer these
  ruins of what never was.

—RICHARD HOWARD

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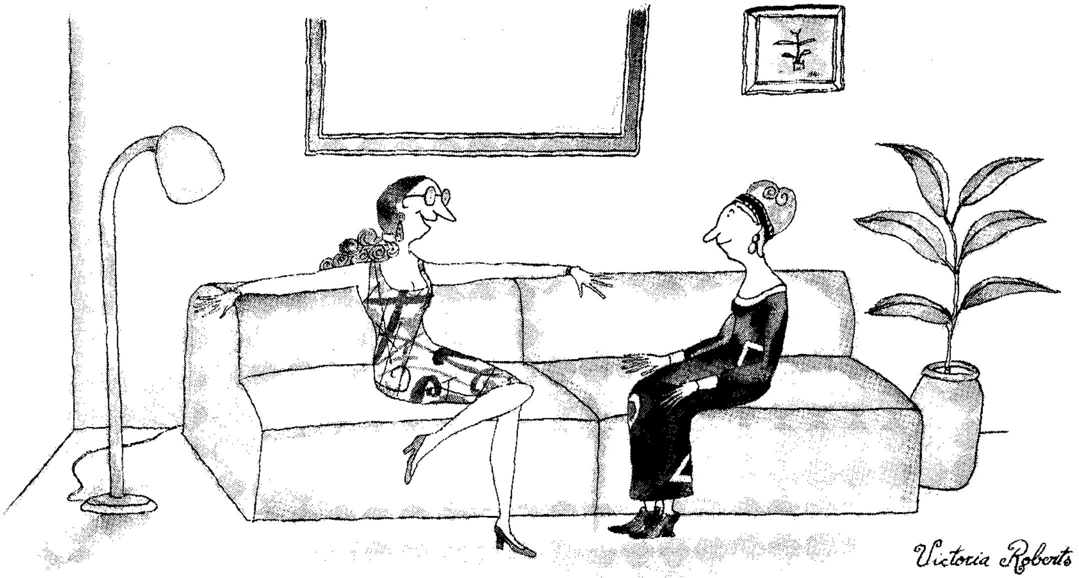
SURFING is not a spectator sport. There is an international contest circuit, and a handful of surfers earn a living from competition, but most of the professionals actually make ends meet by endorsing products—surfboards, wetsuits, or the output of one of the many companies in the surf-apparel industry. Contest surfing is seldom exciting to watch: the ocean cannot be relied on to provide memorable waves on an organizer's schedule, and few of the world's great surf spots happen to be natural amphitheatres.

One of the few times I've seen nonsurfers get their money's worth was on a minor Indonesian island about a hundred miles west of Sumatra, in 1979. Half a dozen of us, Australians and Americans, had found our way to a fishing village on the southwest shore of the island. Photographs of the wave that breaks near the village would later be splashed across the surf magazines, putting the spot on the world surfing map, but at that time it was known only to a small, malaria-ridden band. Two Swiss travellers—hearty types in hiking boots, who had come to the island to look at Stone Age fortifications—turned up in the village one day, and decided that it might be interesting to join us in the surf. They came out on borrowed big-wave boards and, following instructions, took up positions in a deep-water channel near the edge of the reef. The waves happened to be magnificent that day: big, powerful, flawless. The rides were long, fast, and extremely intense, and most of them ended in the channel right where the Swiss travellers bobbed like a pair of buoys, slowly turning orange in the equatorial sun. We would come screaming through the final, jacking section and skittering onto the wind-brushed flat, steering around them as we coasted out of the waves, too pumped up to reply when they applauded solemnly and said things like "Marvellous! How I admire you!" I wanted to try to explain to them that they were witnessing the culmination of years of hard search and sacrifice. But they clearly thought they were just watching a bit of sport. They weren't even afraid of the waves. Two of the surfers there that afternoon had boards they had dragged thousands of miles—across oceans, through Asian cities and jungles—destroyed, snapped in half by the waves, but the Swiss observers just splashed blithely back toward the channel whenever we warned them they were drifting too close.

My girlfriend, Caroline, watched surfing for years, with no particular interest, until one day in Santa Cruz. We were standing on the cliffs at a popular break called Steamer Lane. As surfers rode past the point where we stood, we could see the waves from the side and then from the back. For a few seconds, we saw an elevated version of what the surfers themselves saw, and Caroline's idea of surfing was transformed on the spot. Before, she said, waves to her had been two-dimensional objects, sheer and onrushing, standing up against the sky. Suddenly, she could see that they were in fact pyramids, with steep sides, thickness, broad, sloping backs, and an incredibly complex three-dimensional construction, which changed, collapsing and rising and collapsing, very quickly. It was nearly enough, she said, to make watching surfing interesting.

It was also nearly enough, she said, to make the desire to surf comprehensible. Caroline had never understood why, after surfers spent hours studying the waves from shore, they often announced their intention of going out by saying things like "Let's get it over with." But then she wasn't there in Ventura, on a cold afternoon in 1964, when my father ordered me back into the water after a dismal session during which I had caught no waves. I was eleven years old, just learning to surf, still too small to get my arm around my battered, beloved old board. Three waves, Dad said, and we could go. My feet were bloody—it was a rocky shore, and this was before the invention of ankle leashes—and I was probably crying, and I wanted desperately to get warm and go home. But he had the car keys, not to mention the keys to manhood, and I bitterly paddled back out and caught my three waves, riding them in on my knees. My father has always claimed that I would never have learned to surf if it had not been for that episode. All I know is that over the next few years I lost all interest in other sports—especially team sports. By high school, when the other boys were doing or dying for the school, their parents cheering in the stands, my friends and I were skulking in Mexico, camping on lonely beaches and bluffs, looking for waves.

The only audience that matters to most surfers is other surfers, for they alone can truly appreciate what they are seeing. They have been through the special ordeal of learning to surf, and know what a good performance involves. Also, they share the obsession. Sunday surfers—people for whom surfing is a hobby, who keep their surfboards in the closet next to their skis and tennis racquets—undoubtedly exist. But every Sunday surfer who can stand up on his board was, at some stage, obsessed, for nothing less can get one through the hundreds of difficult, discouraging hours it takes to gain basic skills. And retaining those skills requires constant practice; in other words, competence presumes obsession. It also takes exceptional physical fitness. James Michener once reported, in a book called "Sports in America," that the demands made on the muscles, lungs, and heart by surfing were roughly the same as those made by paddleball and slightly less than those made by badminton. Michener must have meant by "surfing" only the act of riding a wave, because if paddling out and catching waves are included—and it would be hard to surf without catching

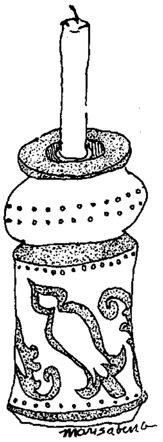


"I want my life catered."

• •

a wave—the level of fitness required for surfing is more like what might be needed for a combination of long-distance rowing, white-water kayaking, and ballet. Brian Lowdon, an Australian exercise physiologist, has published studies showing that surfers have a faster return to baseline pulse and respiratory rate after exertion than even Olympic pentathletes. (Lowdon's studies fail to mention badminton players.)

Not all surfers are robust young males; plenty of females and graying diehards surf, some of them well. Still, it's not really a sport that the entire family—unless the family is a marine version of the Flying Wallendas—can enjoy. Hence the insular codes and cryptic slang of surfers, and the relegation of all non-surfers to alien status—"inlanders," "chalk people." Much of the tribe's language isn't even language. If you listen closely to surfers in the water, you are likely to hear little intelligible speech. Mainly, you'll hear a strange, primitive chorus of whoops, war cries, karate shouts. The first time Caroline and I looked at waves together was months after we met, and she was appalled to hear me start jabbering in a language that she didn't know I knew. "It wasn't just the vocabulary, all those words I had never heard you use—'gnarly' and 'suckout' and 'funk-dog,'" she said, once she had recovered. "It was the *sounds*—the grunts and roars and horrible snarls."



GRUNTS and roars and horrible snarls filled the air in Mark's apartment. Slides from the past couple of winters at Ocean Beach were being shown, and most of the surfers featured in the slides were on hand, so the audience was agitated. "That can't be you, Edwin. You hide under the bed when it gets that big!" Mark convened these gatherings quasi-annually, provided most of the slides, and m.c.'d. "This was the best day last winter," he said, projecting a shot of huge, immaculate Sloat that elicited a deep general groan. "But I don't have any more pictures of it. I paddled out after taking this one, and stayed out all day." Mark's voice actually had the nasal, waterlogged quality it got after a long session. And, in fact, he had already told me that he'd come in from the surf—its steady thunder from across the Great Highway, the coast road where Mark lives, was supplying the bass line for this evening's entertainment—only an hour before. "The moon rose just as it got really dark," he said. "I went back to Sloat, and surfed there for another hour. All those kooks were gone. It was just Peewee and me. It was *great*." I found this scene hard to picture. It wasn't that I didn't believe Mark—his hair was still wet. I just couldn't imagine how anyone could surf by moonlight in waves as big and powerful as the ones that had been breaking at Sloat at dusk. "Sure," Mark said. "Peewee and I do it once every winter."

Peewee was there at Mark's that night. Most of the surfers I knew by name in San Francisco were. Because the surf in and around the city is so formidable, few people learn to surf there—perhaps half of the city's surfers come from elsewhere. These migrants, who tend to be middle class, remain distinct in some ways from the homegrown surfers, who tend to be working class, but the fifteen or twenty men at Mark's that evening came from both groups. Ages ranged from the late teens to the mid-forties. With only three years' seniority, I was probably the most recent arrival in San Francisco. Peewee, who was about the same age as Mark and I—early thirties—and who worked as a carpenter, was a lifelong local. Mark, who grew up in Los Angeles, was still regarded by some natives as a newcomer, but in fact he had been around for more than ten years—he had gone to medical school at the University of California at San Francisco—and during that time had probably logged more hours in the water at Ocean Beach than any three other people combined. He had also become a central figure in local surf society. At least, no one else, from what I had seen, ever put together evenings such as this—and Mark did it with almost no visible effort.

"San Francisco is what I imagine surfing in Southern California was like in the fifties," Mark once told me. "Great waves, not too many people, lots of eccentrics, and everybody pretty much knowing everybody else." After the surf craze of the nineteen-sixties, Southern California surfing became a mob scene, with a cast of hundreds of thousands. An Ocean Beach denizen known as Sloat Bill had recently moved back to San Francisco after a stint in San Diego, declaring, "Surfing down there was like driving on the freeway. Totally anonymous." Sloat Bill, who qualified in my book as an eccentric, was a commodities trader from Texas via Harvard. He got his nickname when, following one of his divorces, he moved into his car and lived for a month in the Sloat parking lot, vowing not to leave until he had mastered the harsh art of surfing Sloat. There was room for argument about whether he had achieved that aim, but certainly he had made more money, after tapping market quotations into a computer plugged into his car's cigarette lighter, than any of the rest of us ever did while sitting in the Sloat parking lot. Sloat Bill wasn't at Mark's that night, but Mark showed several slides of him anyway—taking gruesome spills. A slide of me surfing Ocean Beach the previous winter drew a couple of hoots but no insults—I hadn't been around long enough for that. Mark said he had two new sequences he wanted to show, and then he would turn the projector over to others.

The first sequence illustrated a recent expedition to a remote point break near Cape Mendocino, far up in Northern California. Mark and another San Francisco surfer, a gardener named Rob, had travelled the last ten miles to the surf on dune bikes, racing at low tide along what looked like an extraordinarily rugged wilderness coast. They had camped on the beach for three days. The surf looked very cold and scary, and nobody watching the slides volunteered for a return trip that Mark was planning. On the way home, he said, they had been forced to travel at night, because that was the only time the tide got low enough. There had been a lot of rain while they were camping, so the streams crossing the beach had become major obstacles, especially in the dark. Rob had inadvertently sailed off the bank of one stream and crashed, bending the forks on his bike and soaking the sparkplugs. The tide had started rising while they were trying to get the bike going again. Bob Wise, who owns and operates the only surf shop in San Francisco, had heard enough. He had changed his mind, he said. "Doc, *please* take me with you next time."

The second sequence showed another North Coast exploit: Mark pioneering a fearsome surf spot known as Saunders Reef, in Mendocino County. Local surfers had been watching Saunders break for years, but no one had ever tried to surf it until, earlier that winter, Mark persuaded two big-wave riders from the area to paddle out with him. The wave broke at least half a mile from shore, on a shallow rock reef, and featured what was plainly a horrendous drop, along with some troublesome kelp. Mark's slides, taken by an accomplice with a telephoto lens from a mountainside, showed him cautiously riding deep-green walls two or three times his height. The trickiest part, he said, had actually come not in the water but in a nearby town that evening. People at the local hangout had been alarmed to hear that he'd surfed Saunders, and suspicious, he said, until they learned that he had done it in the company of two locals.

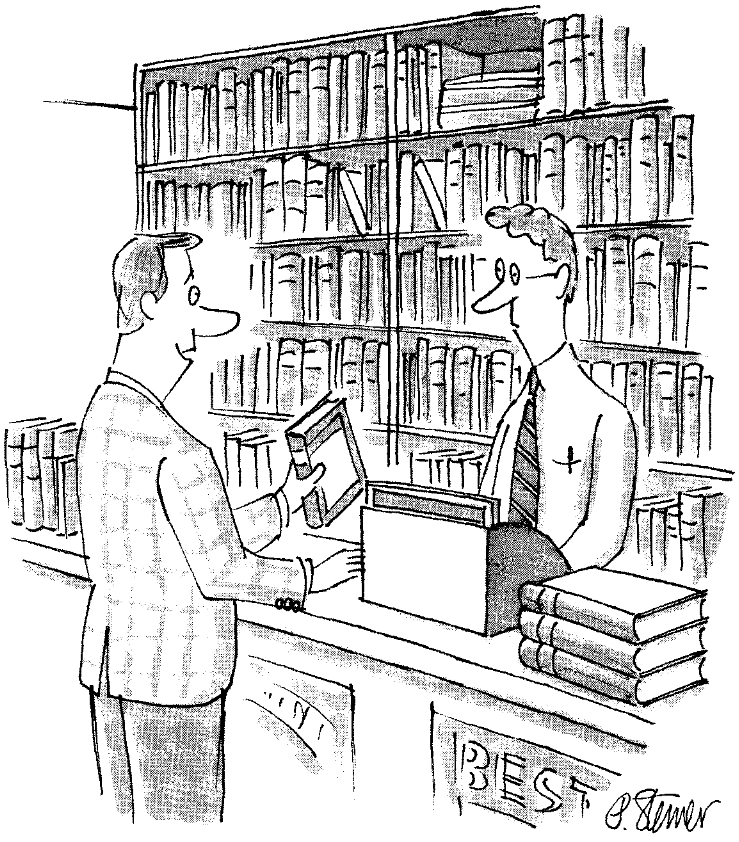
It was surprising to hear Mark mention local sensitivities. They were a real issue—I once saw a clipping from a Mendocino newspaper in which a local columnist described Mark as "a legendary super surfer from the Bay Area," adding, perhaps sarcastically, "I'm sorry I didn't stick around for his autograph"—but I usually thought of Mark as impervious to such matters. Of course, it was also a little tricky showing these slides to this audience; it required a delicate touch, even a measure of self-deprecation. Mark might disregard the finer points of the surfing social contract among strangers in the water, but Ocean Beach was home; here the strong drink of his personality needed sweetening. Earlier in the evening, when Mark, who suffers from asthma, complained that he was having trouble breathing, as he often does in February, an Ocean Beach homeboy known as Beeper Dave had muttered, "Now you know how us mortals feel."

A parade of photographers with their slide carrousels followed Mark. There were water shots, some of them good, taken at a couple of the gentler San Francisco breaks. There were many blurry shots of giant Ocean Beach. Each time an especially frightening wave appeared on the wall, the youngest member of the audience, a teenager named Aaron Plank, snarled, "That's *disgusting*." Aaron, who was easily the most talented young surfer in San Francisco, was not yet a big-wave rider. Some old-timers showed slides from the seventies, featuring surfers I'd never heard of. "Gone to Kauai," I was told. "Gone to Western Australia, last we heard."

Finally, Peewee was prevailed upon to show a handful of slides from a recent trip to Hawaii. Taken at Sunset Beach, one of the best big-wave spots in the world, Peewee's pictures, which were of poor quality, showed some friends windsurfing on a small, blown-out day. "Unbelievable," somebody muttered. "*Windsurfing*." Peewee, who was probably the best pure surfer San Francisco had ever produced—and one of the few people from the city who were actually capable of surfing big Sunset Beach—said little. But he seemed amused by the crowd's disappointment.

As the slide party ended, I stuck around to help Mark clean up—and, watching the crowd drift off down the stairs, I suddenly recalled something that Kim Bodkin, the wife of a local big-wave surfer named Tim Bodkin, had said to me a few days before. I was clearly a charter member, she had said mock-innocently, of what she called "the Doc squad." The remark had mortified me. It meant that I was seen as one of Mark's acolytes. He did have acolytes—guys who wandered into his psychic gravitational field and found themselves orbiting around his fixed, surf-centered ideas about how to live. And it was true that since the day I moved to San Francisco, Mark had made himself my surf coach, health director, and general adviser, urging me on what he called "the surfer's path." And I had largely followed his lead—"played Doc's games," as Edwin Salem, another protégé, put it—letting his exuberance carry me along, letting him be the engine that powered my surfing life. But the fact was that I felt deeply ambivalent about surfing. I had been doing it for more than twenty years, yet I had long been reluctant to think of it as part of my real life as an adult. On balance, I seemed to spend as much energy these days resisting Mark's exhortations as I did actually surfing. So it was dispiriting to hear that I came off as an eager follower. Mark was like the guru character in every Hollywood attempt at a surfing movie—the Kahuna. The last thing I wanted was a walk-on part as one of the slack-jawed chorus.

Really, it shouldn't have mattered. Surfing wasn't supposed to be about one's standing in a company—about caste. In fact, I had spent years slogging through tropical backwaters in search of



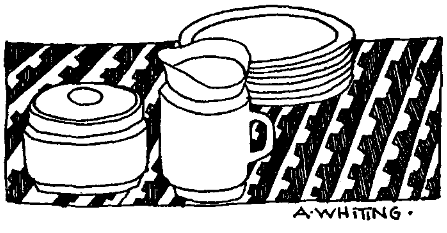
"This is my first book, but if I like it I may buy another in the near future."

empty surf, looking for the purest possible encounter with the remotest possible waves. Still, some dogged essence of common vanity, of grubby society, had followed me everywhere. It was a paradox at the heart of my surfing: a desire to be alone with waves fused to an equal desire to be watched, to perform. The old Hawaiians, who institutionalized the spiritual side of surfing, had no illusions about its locker-room aspects: they loved to gamble on organized competitions. Of course, they were not, from all accounts, prey to self-conscious conflicts about their place in the world, or to a Western-style dichotomy between Society and Nature.

They didn't have to cope with photography, either. The passion of virtually all surfers for photographs of themselves in the act of surfing approaches fetishism. To say that waves and the rides they provide are inherently fleeting events, and that surfers naturally therefore want mementos, barely begins to explain the mania for photographs. For a start, pictures are rarely about what a ride *felt* like; they are about what a ride *looked like to others*. Mark understood the surf-photo mania. He not only put on these slide shows, and had pictures of himself surfing tacked up all over the walls of his apartment; he also delighted in presenting friends with pictures of themselves surfing. I'd seen these photographs hanging in the homes of their subjects, framed like religious icons. I have one here—of me—as I write. Mark likes to say that surfing "is essentially a religious practice." What I've always had trouble deciding is just who or what is being worshipped.

WAVE judgment is an ineffable skill. You're sitting in a trough between waves, and you can't see past the approaching swell, which will not become a wave you can catch. You start paddling upcoast and seaward. Why? If the moment were frozen, you could explain that, by your reckoning, there's a fifty-fifty chance that the *next* wave will have a good takeoff spot (a point at which you can catch the wave and then have a reasonable chance of making it—of staying ahead of the breaking part of the wave—by angling to the left or the right) about ten yards over and a little farther out from where you are now. This calculation is based on: your last two or three glimpses of the swells outside, each glimpse caught from the crest of a previous swell; the hundred-plus waves you have seen break in the past hour and a half; your cumulative experience of three or four hundred sessions at this spot, including fifteen or twenty days that were much like this one in terms of swell size, swell direction, wind speed, wind direction, tide, season, and sandbar configuration; the way the water seems to be moving across the bottom; the surface texture and the water color; and, beneath these elements, innumerable subcortical perceptions too subtle and fleeting to express. These last factors are like the ones that the ancient Polynesian navigators relied upon when, on the open seas, they used to lower themselves into the water between the outriggers on their canoes and let their testicles tell them where in the great ocean they were.

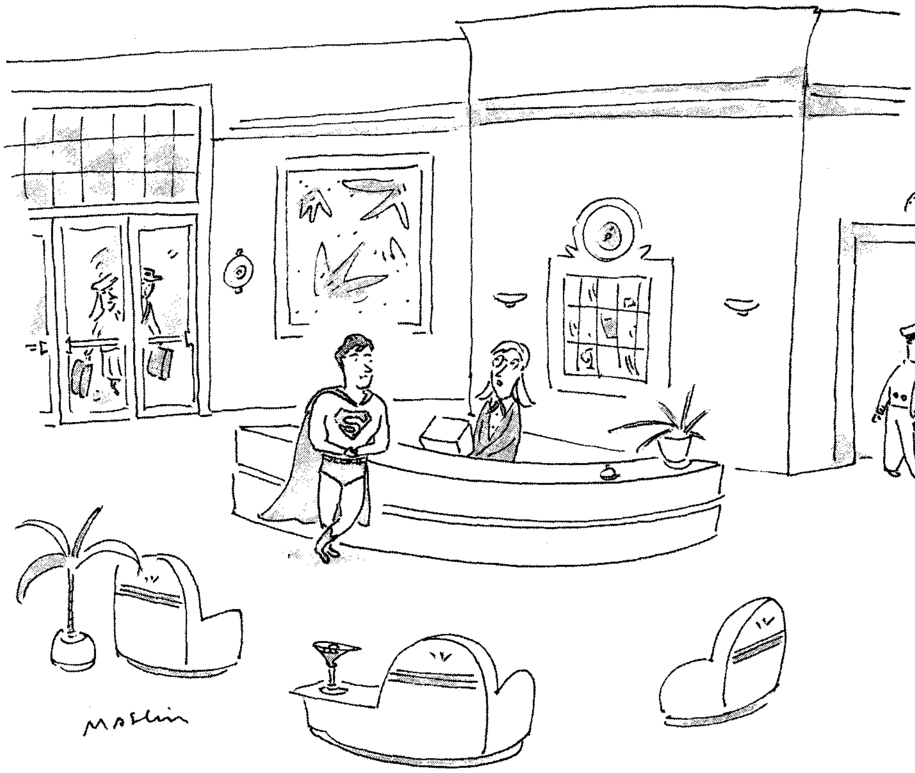
Of course, the moment can't be frozen. And the decision whether to sprint-paddle against the current, following your hunch, or to stop and drift, gambling that the next wave will defy the odds and simply come to you, has to be made in an instant. And the deciding factors are just as likely to be non-oceanic—your mood, your stance (those who surf with their right foot back, as I do, usually pursue and prefer "rights," on which they face the wave as they angle across it, to "lefts," which they must surf "backhand"), the state of your arm muscles, the deployment of other surfers. The role of the crowd is, in fact, often critical. Other surfers can signal approaching waves. You watch someone paddle over the top of a swell and you try to assess, in the last instant before he disappears, what he sees outside. It helps if you know the paddler—whether he is liable to overreact to the sight of a big wave, whether he knows the spot well. Or you may look down the line, upcoast or downcoast, at someone who may have a better view of what's in store for you than you have, and try to gauge his reaction to what he sees. He may even try to signal which way you should be moving—to give you a jump on whatever is bearing down on you. For the most part, though, the crowd is just a nuisance, a distraction, distorting your judgment while you hassle and jockey to get a wave to yourself. When Mark paddles off to some dubious area, far from the crowd, he is partly just reclaiming his concentration on the ocean.



All surfers are oceanographers, and in the area of breaking waves all are engaged in advanced research. Surfers don't need to be told that when a wave breaks actual water particles, rather than simply the waveform, begin to move forward. They are busy figuring out more arcane relationships, like the one between tide and consistency, or marginal phenomena, like double waves. Oceanographers have never been able to agree on an explanation of double waves, yet surfers have had to develop methods of analyzing and coping with them (double waves can be treacherous), and I've heard any number of theories. One holds that some waves get slowed up in their shoreward progress by outside reefs but leave enough water on the reefs so that the following waves move more quickly and then overtake them on the inside reefs. I tend to think, contrarily, that the two parts of a double wave are actually broken pieces of the same wave—one that has been refracted in its sweep along the coast in such a way that one section has slipped behind the other and run up on its back.

The science of surfers is not pure but heavily applied—and completely unsystematic. It is full of myths and superstitions—the widespread belief that a full moon brings big swells, for instance. It also suffers from a fatal anthropomorphism. When you are all wrapped up in surfing them, waves seem alive. They have personalities, distinct and intricate. They act, you react. It's a tender, intimate relationship, and it can thus come as a shock when the wave turns out to be not only insentient but, on occasion, lethal. Wave love is a one-way street.

It is also platonic, in that it trades heavily on the ideal. Surfers have a perfection fixation. Its origin is in the endless variety of waves, and in their ephemerality. Surfers seek a rare and specialized kind of wave. When a great break is discovered, world surfing



"There's nothing here under 'Superman'—is it possible you made the reservation under another name?"

• •

attention focusses furiously on the reports, the photographs, the film. How good is it? How consistent? How difficult, how dangerous? Could I ride it? The ocean being what it is, no place is perfect. Every wave has its virtues and its flaws, and even at the same spot no two waves are ever exactly the same. No break is good on all tides and winds and swells—not to mention flat spells and storms. Still, great surf spots always arouse the fantasy. What if that magnificent wave keeps breaking just like that for another four hundred yards? What if the next wave is just as good? What if it stays that good, hour after hour, day after day? Surfers are always looking for better waves, and the platonic ideal, the perfect wave, keeps them travelling to the farthest reaches of the globe; it kept me on the ocean roads for years on end. There is a dense and growing lore, a grand arcanum of the world's waves, which complements the localized jargon, the cabalistic code through which surfers trade the secrets of their avocation.

Local surf cultures, meanwhile, sprout and flourish near virtually every ridable break on earth. In some places, such as southern Brazil, surfing is a rich boy's sport, taking the social place of polo or the hunt. In most places, it's a multiclass affair, as it was originally, in old Hawaii. I've surfed with yuppie architects and stolid crab fishermen in Ireland, with the sons of campesinos and the sons of oligarchs in Central America. Everywhere, though, one finds the same complicated, passionate attention to minute details of local waves, weather, and coastline. Surfers are like farmers or hunters in their rapt absorption in nature's vicinal habits and vagaries. Ask a voluble local about seasonal variations at his home break, and he'll still be diagramming offshore canyons in the dirt an hour later.

THE best-known surf spot in San Francisco is actually not at Ocean Beach but at Fort Point, underneath the Golden Gate Bridge. In "The Surfer's Almanac: An International Surfing Guide" (1977), by Gary Fairmont R. Filosa II, Fort Point sounds uninviting. "San Francisco Bay is polluted and infested with roving Navy gunboats equipped to sink surfers amid the strong currents, so be cautious," Filosa writes. Although powerful currents do run past Fort Point, and the rocks there can be dangerous, it is in fact the closest thing to a reliably gentle break in the city. (The deadly gunboats have apparently been retired.) Tourists line the seawall on sunny days, trying to get the bridge in the background of their surfing snapshots. The setting is spectacular, and the novelty of surfing in what is technically not the ocean but a bay increases in the springtime, when, after heavy inland rains, the water is fresh to the taste. The wave itself is undistinguished, though. There are other surf spots, farther out the Golden Gate—notably Dead Man's, a low-tide point break that is experts-only—but the main arena is around the corner to the south, off the windswept desolation of Ocean Beach.

A couple of blocks from the south end of Ocean Beach, in the Sunset District, stands Wise Surfboards, a bright, well-managed place, with a long row of shiny new boards along one wall and racks of wetsuits in the back. The shop is a hangout for the Ocean Beach crew, and Bob Wise, a tightly built, sardonic James Brown fan in his early forties, presides over a permanent bull session. It is a sort of surf-story jukebox, featuring a well-worn collection of tales, most of them essentially slapstick: the time Edwin Salem found himself facing, in waist-deep water, a wave pushing before it the trunk of a redwood tree; the time the resin barrel blew up, burning off Peewee's eyebrows. Business is usually slow, except when rich dope-growers from up north come in loaded with cash and saying to their friends, "You want a board? Lemme buy it for you. You think Bobby might want a board? Let's get him one, too."

I used to spend time in Wise's shop, and during the years I lived in San Francisco there was an old photograph taped to the wall behind the counter. It was flyspecked, curling, captionless, and incredibly beautiful. The photograph showed a surfer—Peewee, according to Wise—trimmed very high on a seemingly endless backlighted ten-foot left. The wave was lime green and wind-sculpted, and looked as if it must be somewhere in Bali, but Wise said it was at Outside VFW's, an Ocean Beach sandbar that hadn't broken in years. The wave was so exquisitely proportioned that it made the nine-foot-six-inch big-wave "gun" that

Peewee was riding look like a short board. And the line he was drawing was out of a dream—too high, too fine, too inspired for real life.

During my second or third winter in San Francisco, more photographs began to appear on the wall in Wise's shop. The first several were all big wood-framed prints under glass. They, too, were Ocean Beach surfing shots, but they all had typed captions listing the exact date and place taken, and also the rider, who was in every case "Doc." All the photographs showed Mark riding gigantic waves on days when, it was said, nobody else had been willing to paddle out.

Mark and Peewee were the fire and ice of San Francisco surfing, the oversold thesis and the understated antithesis. They were like two opposed theories of character formation. In Peewee's case, experience seemed to be about removing superfluities; in Mark's case, it was all accumulation. That was how they looked, at least, from the channel where I paddled.

"Do you want to hear my latest metaphor?" Mark asked me. " 'Life is a run-on sentence. The object is to punctuate it with experiences.' You stick in a comma here, a comma there. You try to figure out where to put a semicolon. It takes *balls* to put in a period. If you want to get profound, you stick in a few question marks. And, of course, if you're the impatient type you can always take the sophomoric route—this is what I do—and just throw in exclamation points all over the place. 'Hey! Wow! Did you see *that!*' "

Mark does throw in exclamation points nearly everywhere he goes, and is notably unafraid of appearing sophomoric. He is a passionate fan of punk rock, horror movies, video games, and movie theme music. In the eighteen years I've known him, I've never seen him wear a necktie. Like any self-respecting adolescent, he scorns marriage (he and Jessica Dunne, a painter, have lived together since college and are famously monogamous, but that's different, somehow), parenthood (known to reduce one's willingness to surf big, dangerous waves), and steady employment (proved to reduce one's ability to go surfing on short notice). "A basic orientation for many people is their group of friends as adolescents," he once told me. "As adults, they constantly check themselves against that group: who succeeded, who failed, who swerved in what direction. Among my friends, there was a strong belief in the surfer's path. Most people swerved from it sooner or later. That's why I loved the moment in 'Big Wednesday' when the two old surf buddies get together. They don't surf much anymore, and they're sad about that. They wonder what's become of their old friend Leroy, the masochist, and one of them says, 'I heard he was living up north, riding big waves.' Now, *that's* not a bad epitaph."

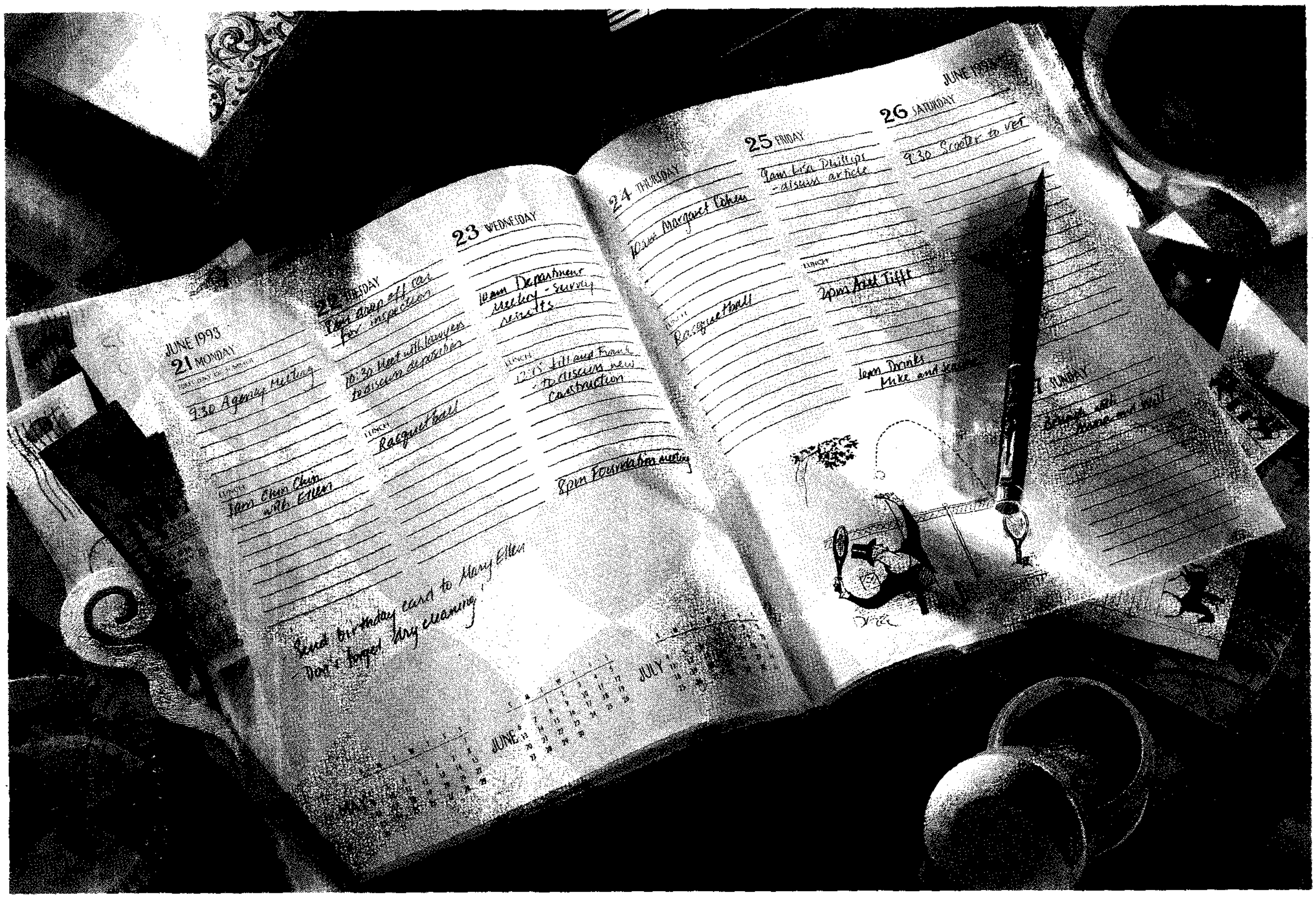
Mark's résumé doesn't actually resemble Leroy the masochist's. It runs for nearly a dozen pages and includes, in the list of his publications, honors, and degrees, "Understanding Cancer," a best-selling university text that was first published while Mark was in medical school and is now in its third edition. He does his best around Ocean Beach to appear unemployed and on permanent surf call, but the truth is that he holds down several medical jobs, including a post as assistant clinical professor at U.C. San Francisco. His specialty is family practice. He sees his patients at an inner-city clinic, and he says that they are the only thing that keeps him from fleeing San Francisco for half the year—spring and summer, when the surf at Ocean Beach is almost always poor. "But it's O.K.," he says, "because that's where I get my strength, my metaphors—from my ongoing relationships with my patients." Mark works one overnight shift a week on a geriatric ward at a San Francisco hospital. What metaphor does he derive from the geriatric ward? Mark pauses. "It's all about conveyance," he says, finally. "The souls have already departed the bodies, I think, of some of the people there, and I can only surmise that they continue living only because they have some important unsolved problem." For his own models for aging well, Mark looks to older surfers—he calls them "elders." Doc Ball, a lifelong surfer and retired dentist in Northern California, now in his eighties, is a favorite. "He's still stoked," Mark says. "He still *skateboards!*"

Peewee agrees that Mark is preternaturally youthful. "He's like somebody who's twenty or twenty-two, with that much stoke about surfing, that much enthusiasm," Peewee told me, during a rare conversation. But Peewee disagrees about the long-term benefits of the surfing life. As he put it, "the biggest locals can be the biggest derelicts." We were sitting in a Chinese restaurant near his house, in the upper Sunset, with Peewee warily watching me take notes. "The surfing life just breeds a lot of derelicts," he said. "It's such a great sport it corrupts people. It's like drug addiction. You just don't want to do anything else. You don't want to go to work. If you do, it's always 'You really missed it' when you get off." As a carpenter, Peewee said, he had some job flexibility, and he tried to take a month off each year to go surfing someplace else, like Hawaii or Indonesia. But there was no way that he could surf as avidly as he had surfed while growing up—not without risking dereliction.

Peewee grew up in the Sunset. He learned to surf on borrowed boards at Pedro Point, a beginners' break a few miles south of San Francisco. It took him five years to work up to Ocean Beach, which, he recalled, was an even more formidable spot in the days before ankle leashes. As a teen-ager, he met some surfers who lived near the water and let him keep his board at their house, and he started riding his bicycle to Ocean Beach daily. His memories of his early surfing years are filled with names I've never heard before—Jimmy Holt, Rod Lundquist, the Valera brothers—and with a little kid's awe of the big guys. Lundquist "was ahead of his time," Peewee recalled. "He used to surf the Beach on huge days alone. No leash. No wetsuit. He wore Speedo trunks. Rode a long board. He left to go teach college in Santa Cruz." Peewee eventually became a big guy himself—over six feet, broad-shouldered, with the poker-faced, blond good looks of a B-Western gunfighter. He also became a superb surfer. But he never managed to ditch the nickname that his older brother's friends hung on him when he was small.

He also seems never to have lost the unassumingness of the novice. Getting him to talk, over tepid tea in an emp-

START EACH DAY WITH A SMILE


JUNE 1993
21 MONDAY
9:30 Agency Meeting
12pm Chin Chin with Ellen
22 TUESDAY
Drop off car for inspection
10:30 Meet with lawyers to discuss deposition
Racquetball
23 WEDNESDAY
10am Department meeting - survey results
12:15 Jill and Frank - to discuss new construction
8pm Foundation meeting
24 THURSDAY
10am Margaret Cohen
Racquetball
25 FRIDAY
9am Lisa Phillips - discuss article
2pm Ned Tufts
6pm Drinks Mike and
26 SATURDAY
9:30 Scooter to vet
27 SUNDAY
Send birthday card to Mary Ellen
Don't forget dry cleaning
JUNE
JULY

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Offer only available in US and Canada. 235853 tying restaurant, was the journalistic equivalent of paddling out at Sloat on a mean day. My request for an interview had no doubt startled him. Peewee knew me as a face in the water, a recent Ocean Beach regular, one of Mark's crowd. Now, suddenly, I was a reporter. I wasn't sure why I had revealed this to Peewee, except that I felt direly confused about surfing myself, and was trying to sort it out. As one who had been struggling for several winters with Mark's contention that to miss a swell was a far greater sin than to miss a deadline—Mark's favorite expression was, in fact, "You really missed it"—I got more comfort than Peewee knew from his simple description of the inevitable conflict between surfing and work.

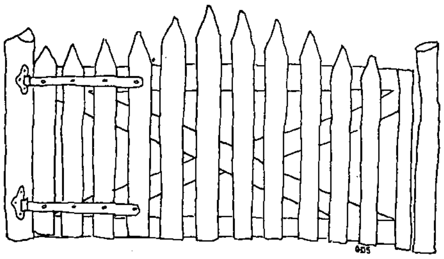
Peewee's self-effacement was so thorough that it was easy to misread him as remote. Even I could see, though, after knowing him awhile, that his terse exterior hid, and not very well, an acute shyness, which, in turn, hid, somewhat more effectively, an old-fashioned sensitivity. He was a straight-A student in school—I learned this not from him but from others—and an English major at San Francisco State University. He also took a lot of science courses in college, including an oceanography class in which the instructor once averred that the big winter swells that hit the Northern California coast came typically from the south. This notion is solidly false. The instructor refused to be corrected, and Peewee let it slide.

When letting foolishness slide became impossible, though, he was capable of taking a memorable stand. Once, on a crowded day at VFW's, during my first winter in San Francisco, a local surfer, riding a three-finned board, was behaving badly—stealing waves, jumping the queue, and threatening anyone who objected. Peewee warned him once, quietly. When the guy kept it up, then nearly decapitated another surfer with a clumsy pullout, Peewee invited him to leave the water. The miscreant snarled. Peewee knocked him off his board, turned his board over, and, with small, sharp blows with the palm of his hand, broke off each of its fins. Surfing is difficult, if not impossible, without fins. The definned one paddled in. Years later, Ocean Beach regulars who hadn't seen this incident were still asking those who had to tell it again. (A basic orientation for many people is *still* their group of friends as adolescents.)

Peewee was a locals' local. He was one of those guys who, when you surfed with them at Fort Point, under the Golden Gate Bridge, could look up and tell you where all the elevators inside the bridge were; how many workers were entombed in its pilings; how long the lines of men waiting for work were during its construction, back in the Depression, and how much they were paid; and how much the present-day maintenance workers, some of whom were friends or relatives, earned. Peewee was a union carpenter, and often served as the job steward on construction sites. When I asked him about that, he said simply, "I believe in the construction unions."

He was equally closemouthed on the subject of big waves. He preferred them to small waves, he said, because they were uncrowded. "Crowds can get tense," he said. "In big waves, it's just you and the ocean." Peewee was known around Ocean Beach for his iron nerves in big surf, but it took him a number of years, he said, to build up to facing very big waves. "Each new wipeout makes you realize, though, that you're actually safer than you thought. It's just water. It's just holding your breath. The wave will pass." Did he never panic? "Sure. But all you have to do, really, is relax. You'll always come up." In retrospect, he said, the times when he had thought he was drowning were not in fact such close calls.

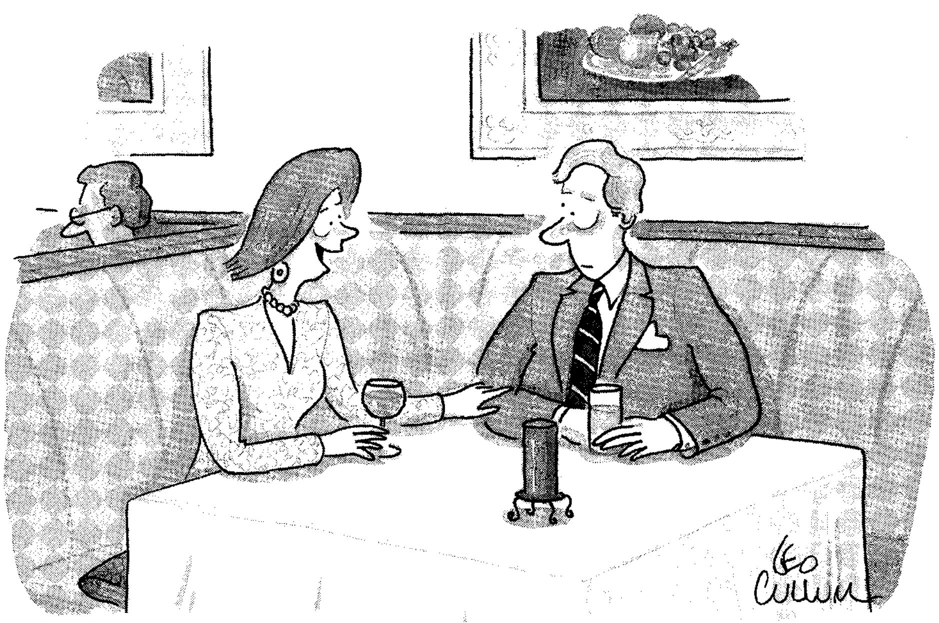
Mark was more voluble, naturally, about big surf. He, too, believes that big waves are less dangerous than most people think, but he talks about the ocean's behavior in extreme situations—and the human response to it—in clinical, even scientific terms, emphasizing factors such as galvanic skin response and certain chemicals released by the liver. "Time slows down when you're out in big waves—not just while you're riding a wave but the whole time you're out," he says. "Your mind keeps playing survival messages. Your concentration is absolute. It's the possibility of death." This is also, according to Mark, what happens to people who have cancer, and even to those around them. Lives are suddenly viewed from vital new perspectives; the possibility of imminent death concentrates the mind and spirit. There are psychologists who say that ferocious concentration on one activity for a period of time can lead to a heightened sense of well-being, even to euphoria, and Mark believes it. Surfing big waves, he says, leaves him "feeling like I'm going to explode with joy."



Although death by surfing pleasure seems to pose no threat to Peewee, he and Mark have shared many extraordinary moments in the water. Every surfer has a limit to the size of the waves he will venture among, and during the years I lived in San Francisco it chanced that their separate upper limits were in a range not broached by anyone else at Ocean Beach. Thus, while they were an unlikely pair, and were quite competitive (on a bad day, the best word that Mark had for Peewee was "laconic"; the key term in Peewee's description of Doc, meanwhile, was "ego"), they were often the only two people willing to paddle out on the days that Mark liked to call "epic."

Mark's upper limit seemed at times not to exist. He had a great ambition, for instance, to be the first to surf an infamous shipping hazard known as the Potato Patch, several miles off the Golden Gate. He once persuaded Peewee to go out there with him in a speedboat, on a day when Mark estimated that the waves they found were between twenty-five and fifty feet. (Peewee thought they were twenty to twenty-five.) Certainly they were the largest waves that either of them had ever seen. Nobody got out of the boat, and Peewee renounced any ambition to ride the Patch. It wasn't even a surf spot, he said. But Mark went out there again, on a smaller day, a couple of years later, and actually took off on a wave. He never got to his feet, but he wrote about the experience for a surfing magazine, and he still hopes to surf the Patch someday.

"Doc's kind of building a reputation here," Peewee conceded, ten years after



"I don't love you anymore, Barry, but I still think you're a great American."

Mark started surfing Ocean Beach. What about Peewee himself? "I'm kind of maintaining a reputation here," he admitted. But his interest in big waves was not indiscriminate; he didn't try to surf every big day that came along. Mark would go out in anything, no matter how big, no matter how ugly; Peewee surfed big waves only when they were clean. What was the biggest wave he had ridden at Ocean Beach? "The biggest wave I've taken off on out here, I didn't make," he said. "The wave was perfect—my board was just too small. It was an eight-four. I only got about three-quarters of the way down the face. I fell, and I got sucked up and over. It was the scariest moment I've had. I thought I'd never stop free-falling. But it wasn't so bad." How big was it? "Twelve feet," Peewee said. "Maybe fifteen." He shrugged. "I hardly try to measure waves in feet anymore." That was just as well, because plenty of surfers around the city believed they had seen Peewee ride waves larger than fifteen feet. It was also notoriously difficult to estimate the size of a wave you were riding. What was the biggest surf he had ever *seen* ridden at Ocean Beach?

"The day after Thanksgiving, sometime back in the seventies," Peewee said. "Outside VFW's. Breaking top to bottom. It was twenty feet, if you have to measure it. Bigger than anything Doc has surfed here. There were three guys out. Only one of them, Bones, was from the city. He lives in Hawaii now. This was before Doc moved here."

THE size of waves is a topic of constant dispute among surfers. Some measure the wave face from the lowest point in the trough, producing dimensions that sound impressive—except that underestimation is *más macho*. Underestimation is practiced with the greatest aplomb on the North Shore of Oahu, in Hawaii, the big-wave capital of the surfing world. On the North Shore, a wave must be the size of a small cathedral before the locals will call it eight feet. The arbitrariness of all this is obvious from the fact that among surfers there is no such thing as a nine-foot wave or a thirteen-foot wave. (Anyone who says there is would be laughed off the beach.) Ricky Grigg, an oceanographer and big-wave surfer, used to phone a friend who lived at Waimea Bay, the premier big-wave spot on the North Shore, for surf reports when he lived in Honolulu. His friend's wife, who could see the surf from her kitchen, could never grasp surfers' irrational system of wave measurement, but she could estimate with fair accuracy how many refrigerators stacked on top of one another would equal the height of the waves, so Grigg used to ask her, "How many refrigerators is it?"

Wave size ends up being a matter of local consensus. In San Francisco, the standard unit of measurement is the height of a man. A "double-overhead" wave is one that looks, from shore, to be twice the height of someone riding it. And a double-overhead wave is, for no good reason, reckoned to be eight feet. A triple-overhead wave is ten feet. A wave four times the height of a rider is twelve feet. Five times is fifteen feet, more or less. Beyond that, the system disintegrates. Peter Cole, a veteran big-wave rider, got it right when he wrote that big waves are best measured not in feet but in increments of fear.

Sloat looked to be at least five refrigerators as I pulled into the parking lot one Sunday afternoon in January. The waves breaking on the outside bar were difficult to see, though. The sun was shining, but the surf was generating a salt mist that filled the air on both sides of the Great Highway—a sharp-smelling haze like some essence from the bottom of the ocean. There was no wind, but gray plumes of spray rose nonetheless from the tops of the largest waves, lifted by the sheer mass and speed of their crests as they plunged. The inside bar was a maelstrom of dredging, midsized killer waves, their dark-chocolate faces smeared with drifts of foam. The outside bar looked ill-defined, the swell confused, but the outside waves themselves were smooth and shiny, with clean peaks and sections looming randomly in the mist. Some of them looked ridable—loveliness amid lethalness.

I was surprised to see the Sloat lot full. It was Super Bowl day, the 49ers were playing, and kickoff was within the hour. A high percentage of the cars, trucks, and vans were familiar, though: the Ocean Beach surf crew was out in force. Some of its members slouched behind steering wheels, others sat on the hoods of their cars, a few stood on the embankment above the beach. Nobody was in a wetsuit, and no boards that I could see had been unsheathed, but everyone was staring out to sea. I looked for a minute, and

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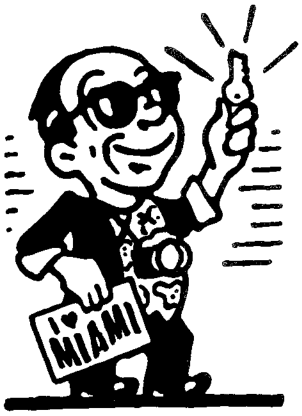

THERE YOU ARE, both of you, considering a Subaru SVX. The younger, more adventurous you is taken aback by the Italian styling. And the SVX engine! A 6-cylinder, 230-horsepower monster capable of blasting from 0 to 60 in just over 7 seconds. The wilder you also goes on about the absurd top speed of 140 miles an hour and the fact the special window design allows you to drive in a rainstorm with the windows down without getting drenched. The windows down in a rainstorm without getting drenched, the crazy you shouts again. And right then and there the conservative you, the joyless voice of reason, gets ready to reprimand such reckless thoughts, but then you pause and think — Hey, this is a practical car. It's a Subaru® and that means reliable, dependable transportation. Furthermore, the SVX has room for four beefy adults, and it comes with sensible All-Wheel Drive traction, 4-channel anti-lock brakes, a driver's-side air bag and a fully-independent suspension. Now both of you are smiling. Everything is beautiful. Until you're driving home. What to listen to on the optional 6-speaker CD player? Big band or heavy metal?

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saw nothing. I rolled down my window and called to Sloat Bill, who was standing on the embankment, heavy shoulders hunched, hands jammed in the pockets of a ski jacket. He turned, regarded me for a moment from behind mirrored sunglasses, then cocked his head toward the surf and said, "Doc and Peewee."

I got out and stood on the embankment, shielding my eyes against the glare, and eventually picked out a pair of tiny figures rising over a massive silver swell. "Neither one of them's taken off for the last half hour," Sloat Bill said. "It's really shifty." Someone had set up a camera on a tripod, I noticed, but he wasn't bothering to man it; the mist made photography hopeless. "They're both riding yellow guns," Sloat Bill said. He kept his eyes on the horizon. He seemed miserable, I thought—even more gruff than usual. He was probably agonizing over whether to try to paddle out himself. Sloat Bill thought of himself as a big-wave surfer, and he went out on some huge days. But he was a slow paddler, and often never got past the inside bar. He was powerfully built, with a great bull neck—he still played competitive rugby, though he was over forty—and he could probably bench-press twice what I could, but fast paddling is not simply a matter of strength. Making a board glide on the surface is partly a matter of artful leverage, and pushing through waves is largely a matter of presenting the least possible resistance to them. Big waves demand a paradoxical combination—ferocity and passivity—that Sloat Bill had never seemed to master. He had only the ferocity. He rolled in the waves like a redwood log, or a cannister of pure testosterone. He amused other surfers, very few of whom played rugby. He fascinated me, although I suspected that I irritated him. He once called me a Communist during a poker game at his apartment. Worse, I had sometimes made it out on days when he had not.

Today, I wasn't tempted to try. Indeed, I couldn't see how Mark and Peewee had made it—or how Peewee had been persuaded to try. It wasn't his sort of surf—not clean. I stood with Sloat Bill awhile, trying to keep Mark and Peewee in sight. They disappeared behind swells for minutes at a time. They paddled north constantly, barely holding position against a southbound current. After fifteen minutes, one of them suddenly appeared at the top of an immense wall, paddling furiously toward shore at the head of a peak that looked at least a block wide. A volley of sharp shouts and curses went up along the Sloat embankment. But the wave passed the paddler by; it stood sheer and black across the horizon for what seemed a long time, then silently broke, top to bottom. There were relieved shouts, and strangely bitter curses. The assortment of non-surfers in the parking lot, on the embankment, on the beach, all looked up in confusion. None of them seemed aware that anybody was in the water.

HOURGLASS

"Flawless" is the word, no doubt, for this third of May
that has landed on the grounds of Mayfair,
the Retirement Community par excellence.

Right behind the wheels of the mower, grass
explodes again, the bare trees most tenderly
push out their chartreuse tips.

Bottle bees are back. Feckless, reckless,
stingless, they probably have a function.
Above the cardinal, scarlet on the rim

of the birdbath, twinning himself,
they hover, cruise the flowers, mate.
The tiny water catches the sky.

On the circular inner road, the lady
untangles the poodle's leash from her cane.
He is wild to chase the splendid smells.

The small man with the small smile,
rapidly steering his Amigo,
bowls past. She would wave, but can't.

All around, birds and sexual flowers
are intent on color, flight, fragrance.
The gardener sweeps his sweaty face

with a khaki sleeve. His tulips are shined
black at their centers. They have come along nicely.
He is young and will be gone before dark.

The man in the Amigo has in mind a May
a mirror of this, but unobtainable
as the touch of the woman in that glass.

The sun's force chills him. But the lady
with the curly poodle could melt her cane
in the very heat of her precious pleasure.

She perfectly understands the calendar
and the sun's passage. But she grips the leash
and leans on the air that is hers and here.

—Josephine Jacobsen

• •

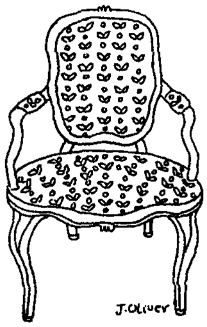
I had somewhere else to be, across the city—at a friend's house, where a group of people, none of them surfers, gathered every year to watch the Super Bowl. I asked Sloat Bill how long Mark and Peewee had been out. "Couple hours," he said. "It took 'em thirty-five minutes to get out." He didn't turn his head.

Twenty minutes later, I was still there, still waiting for something to happen. The mist was thicker, the sun was lower in the western sky. I was now going to miss the kickoff. A couple of big sets had come through, but Mark and Peewee had been nowhere near them. Although there was still no wind, the conditions were, if anything, deteriorating. Huge rips had started moving through the outside bars, increasing their confusion. Soon the only question would be how Mark and Peewee were going to get back in.

Finally, somebody caught a wave. It was a gigantic right, four or five times overhead, with a wave in front of it that blocked all view of the rider after the drop. Several seconds passed. Then the rider reappeared, fifty yards down the line and climbing the face at a radical angle, eliciting screams of surprise from the gallery. It was impossible to tell who was surfing. He rode all the way to the top of the wave, pivoted against the sky, then plunged out of sight again. There were appreciative cries and groans. "Fucker's *ripping*," someone said. The rider was, in fact, surfing the wave as if it were a third the size it really was. And he kept it up, wheeling and carving huge cutbacks, riding from the trough to the crest in unnervingly sharp arcs as the wave in front of his died down, affording us an untrammelled view. It was still impossible to tell who it was, even after the yellow of his board became visible through the haze. I had never seen Mark *or* Peewee surf a wave that size with such abandon. The wave lost half its height, and all its power, when it hit the deep water between the bars, but the rider found a freak piece of steep swell that carried him cleanly across the flat spot and onto the inside bar. Somehow, as the wave jacked over the inside bar, he slipped down the face early enough to make a turn, and then drew a breathtaking line and ran for forty yards under a ledging lip, his arms outstretched against a backlighted wall, before he finally straightened off, escaping the lip's explosion by sailing far out onto the flat water in front of the wave. He stayed on his feet when the white water, its energy exhausted, finally caught him, and he worked it back and forth all the way to the sand.

As he started up the beach, board tucked under his arm, it was still difficult to tell who it was. Finally, it became clear that it was Peewee. At the moment of recognition, Sloat Bill stepped forward, to the edge of the embankment, and solemnly began to clap his hands. Others, including me, joined in. Peewee looked up, startled. His face filled with alarm, and then sheepishness. He turned and angled south across the beach, shaking his head, and climbed the embankment where no one could see him.

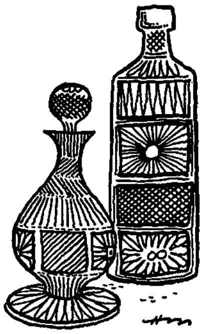
I HAD been bewitched by surfing since I was a kid. I had often wanted to break the spell; Mark, meanwhile, wanted to deepen it. I remembered the first time I accompanied him up the Mendocino coast, shortly after moving to San Francisco. The surf was big and scary, with a numbing northwest wind ruining every surf break except Point Arena Cove, which was protected by a thick kelp bed. I gingerly followed Mark out through the channel there, intimidated by the wind, the freezing water, and, above all, the heavy-gauge waves plunging and grinding down the rock reef. Mark threw himself into the fray, of course, surfing aggressively and noisily enjoying himself, and I gradually moved farther out along the reef, taking off on bigger and bigger waves. Finally, I took off on a very big wave indeed, and nearly fell when the nose of my board caught a piece of chop on the takeoff. I recovered, barely, and managed to make the wave. Afterward, Mark, who had seen that takeoff from the channel, said that he had actually been frightened for me. "That would have been really, really bad if you hadn't made it," he said. "That wave was a solid ten feet, and the only thing that got you down that face was twenty years of experience." It was true that I had been surfing on pure instinct at that point, too intent to be scared, but somehow Mark's assessment pleased me deeply. I was trying to figure out how to live with the disabling enchantment of surfing—and with Mark's efforts to weave the spell tighter—and I realized that he had said a lot of things that pleased me deeply.



He had also said a lot of things that infuriated me. Once, on another trip to Mendocino, while we were surfing a beautiful little cove we called Secrets, I had just ridden a wave rather well, I thought, and Mark had seen it. "You really got a rhythm going on that one," he said as we paddled back out. "You need to do that more." Giving unwanted advice in the water was an outrageous breach of what I understood as the surfing social contract, and the condescension of his remark only made it worse. It was ridiculous, I knew, to be so sensitive, and yet surfing was always this strangely private exhibition—something Mark couldn't help but know. He was insulated in some ways, though, from how other people felt. His manic insouciance in public places, for instance, owed much to the fact that no one wanted to mess with a guy his size. I had noticed that, while pushing through a crowd, he didn't tap people on the elbow to get past but, instead, wrapped his huge hands around their shoulders and gently shifted them out of his path, seemingly oblivious of the rapid sequence of surprise, irritation, and intimidation he left in his wake. But the true source of his endless self-assurance was not his height, I thought, but his abiding sense of entitlement and invulnerability.

A good part of my enchantment in San Francisco was with the seamlessness of Mark's world, its willed continuities and focus, its manifest satisfactions. My own life felt riven by discontinuities. Surfing, specifically, was like some great, battered remnant of childhood that kept drifting incongruously into the foreground. More specifically still, surfing big waves felt atavistic, a compulsive return to some primal scene to prove some primal fact of manhood. Over the time I had been surfing Ocean Beach, I had become fascinated by Peewee as well. His world also seemed oddly seamless, although in a quite different way from Mark's. The powerful continuities between his past and his present, between his childhood and his adulthood, were links of place, of community, of character. They were so quiet. They didn't seem to need to display themselves.

EARLY in the spring of my third year in San Francisco, after a series of storms, the sandbar at Outside VFW's began to break regularly for the first time since I had moved to the city. I saw why the wave was a local legend. The bar was unusually long and straight for Ocean Beach, with a deep channel at its northern end. Northwest swells produced clean waves there, but only short rides. The waves hit the bar straight on; one had to take off very near the channel to make them. More westerly swells, on the other hand, struck the bar at a slight angle, making for long, fast lefts of exceptional quality. Since the bar began to break only when the swell was over six feet, Outside VFW's was never crowded. I had watched it break several times, including a couple of frightening days when only Mark, Peewee, Tim Bodkin, and a scatter of other certified big-wave riders paddled out, and I'd actually surfed it a few times on marginal days, when it wasn't breaking with much authority—before I ever had to face the question of paddling out myself on a big, serious day. It was Mark, of course, who forced the issue. "You can use my eight-eight," he kept saying, indicating the yellow gun in the back of his van as he scrambled into his wetsuit. "I'll ride my eight-six."



It occurred to me that Mark might be trying, for his own reasons, to offer my life one last time to the gods of Ocean Beach. Maybe he already knew what I was trying to find the nerve to tell him—that I had decided to move back to New York. Maybe he was hoping to punish me for attempted desertion. I had mixed feelings about leaving, but one of the biggest was relief. Each winter at Ocean Beach, I had had at least one bad scare—some heavy passage in big surf which troubled my sleep for many nights afterward. Bob Wise understood. "Surfers never do drown out here," he once told me. "It's tourists and drunk bikers and sailors who drown. But even the most experienced surfers get *convinced* they're about to drown out here at least once a winter. That's what makes Ocean Beach so weird." Mark, who thrived on the weirdness, would not understand, I assumed. Still, justified or not, I was glad to be getting away without drowning. I was also glad to be getting out from under Mark's evangelizing gaze. I had heeded his general advice to take surfing more seriously, but there were other things I took more seriously still. It was a shame that riding waves was unlikely to be a mainstay of my daily round in Manhattan, but in truth I was bored with California. I was also, when it came to surfing, tired of being a sidekick. I just didn't know how to tell Mark I was going. I didn't want to hear about how I was swerving from the surfer's path.

Ten or fifteen guys were hanging out on the seawall. VFW's—*Inside* VFW's—was the most popular spot along Ocean Beach, and most of the people standing around watching the waves that day, and making no move to go out, surfed there regularly. Among them was an older guy, a housepainter named Rich, who was one of the dominant surfers down at this end of the beach. Rich scowled at me as I walked past, the yellow eight-eight under my arm, and I realized I had never seen him out in waves over six feet. Today was eight to ten, at least. The swell was massive and fairly west. It was not immaculate—there was a little sideshore wind, and a raging rip—but several stunning lefts roared through, unridden, while we were getting ready to go out. Bodkin and Peewee were already out, and each had caught a couple of huge waves, but they were surfing conservatively, and letting the ledgier sets go by.

Paddling Mark's board felt like paddling a miniature oil tanker. I kept an old single-fin seven-six for big days, but I had been riding a three-fin six-nine most of the winter. Thick-railed and sharp-nosed, the eight-eight gun floated me high out of the water, and I had no trouble keeping up with Mark as we started out through the channel. The water was brownish-green and very cold; the channel, which ran clear from the shore break out to sea, with no inside bar to cross, was choppy and spooky nonetheless, with huge swells sweeping into it from both sides, forming fat, unpleasant A-frames that half broke before they vanished. There was a shallow outside bar to the north, where enormous waves leaped up and disembowelled themselves with a horrible growl. To the south, the last section of the long, winding left at Outside VFW's wasn't much more inviting. It, too, looked shallow and extremely thick. Mark and I paused to watch a smooth-faced wave pitch heavily over the last section of the bar, barely twenty yards from where we lay. Into the great, dark barrel it formed Mark bellowed "Death!" The idea seemed to please him.

I kept angling out as Mark turned left, cutting across the edge of the bar. Peewee and Bodkin were a couple of hundred yards south, and Mark made a beeline for them, but I circled far around, preferring to look like a coward rather than take a chance on getting caught by a big set. A small set rolled through. It was too far inside for any of us to catch, but even it thundered ominously when it finally broke. I found the scale of things out here thoroughly daunting. I did not look forward to seeing a big set. I checked my position against the shore as I slowly moved south. Huge-lettered graffiti on the seawall—"Maria" and "Kimo" and "Ptah"—marked my progress. The shore looked, as it often did on big days, bizarrely peaceful and normal. A dark line of cypress trees rose beyond the seawall—a windbreak for the ocean end of Golden Gate Park—and two windmills rose above the trees. Just north, the cliffs were brushed with pink flowers and lined by a stone belvedere, from the ruins of the old Sutro mansion. It all looked so stable. I kept yanking my gaze back and forth, craning to see where I was, then craning to see if anything nightmarish was yet looming out at sea.

Being out in big surf is dreamlike. Terror and ecstasy ebb and flow ceaselessly around the edges of things, each threatening to overwhelm the dreamer. An unearthly beauty fills the world, in scenes that seem mythic even as they unfold. The experience usually arouses in me a ferocious ambivalence: I want to be nowhere else; I want to be anywhere else. I want to drift and gaze, drinking it in, but know, at the same time, that maximum alertness is crucial. Truly big surf is a force field that dwarfs you, and you survive your time there only by reading those forces carefully and well. But the ecstasy of actually riding big waves requires placing yourself right beside the terror of being buried by them: the filament separating the two states becomes whisker-thin. Dumb luck weighs heavily, painfully. And when things go badly, as they inevitably do—when you're caught inside by or fail to make a very large wave—all your skill and strength and judgment mean nothing.

Nobody maintains his dignity while getting rumbled by a big wave. The only thing you can hope to control at that point is the panic.

I edged south slowly, toward Mark and the others, taking deep, regular breaths in an effort to slow my heart, which had been pounding unpleasantly since the moment I first thought seriously about paddling out. Mark took off on a wave as I approached the lineup. He screamed as he launched into a mammoth face and disappeared behind a seething brown wall. The takeoff spot, I noted, was directly off a big red graffito, "Ptah Lives." Bodkin, who was still sitting with Peewee, shouted my name, grinning widely. It was a grin that struck me as half wicked amusement at my safety-first route to the lineup, half congratulation that I was out there at all. Peewee simply nodded hello. Peewee's blandness in the water was usually a blessing. His poker-faced virtuosity left psychological space for other surfers, which was something that many of them, I believed, appreciated; in fact, I believed that if the rider of that remarkable wave at Sloat on the day of the Super Bowl had turned out to be Mark people would not have applauded. Sometimes, though—today, perhaps—I thought Peewee carried surf cool a bit far. Of course, he probably didn't consider Outside VFW's at this size a particularly scary place, and maybe didn't realize that for me it was a stretch.

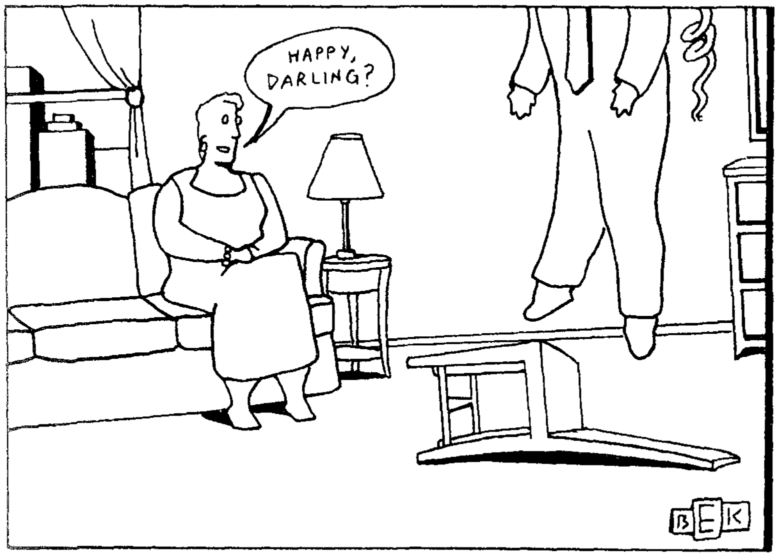
As it happened, luck—and the right board—were with me that afternoon. I caught several big, good waves over the next couple of hours. I didn't surf them particularly well—it was all I could do to keep the eight-eight pointed in the right general direction—but they were long, fast rides, and after each of them I managed to scramble back outside unscathed. Mark's board was wonderfully stable, and allowed me to get into waves extremely early. I even caught what Mark later called "the wave of the day." On another afternoon, on another board, I would probably have let it pass, but I found myself at the head of the peak alone, far outside, as a vast wave arrived. The wall stretched north for blocks, seemingly impossible to make, but by that point I had great faith in the bar and the channel. I got in early, using a small cross chop on the face to launch myself over the ledge. I had to fight off a little jolt of acrophobia as I jumped to my feet—the bottom of the wave looked miles beneath me. Halfway down the face, I leaned back hard into a turn, struggling to stay over my board as it gained speed across the millrace running up the face. My nerve wobbled a second time when I looked over my shoulder at the wall ahead. It was much bigger than I had expected: taller and steeper and more threatening. I turned away and concentrated, as if I were wearing blinders, on the few feet of rushing water immediately in front of me, carving long, gradual high-speed turns. The wave held up beautifully, and I made it easily, although the final, house-thick section next to the channel shot me out so fast that I had to abandon all pretense of control and simply stand there, knees bent, a gratified passenger.

Peewee was in the channel, paddling past as I pulled out. He nodded. We began paddling back out together. My entire body was trembling. After a minute, I couldn't help myself. I asked, "How big was that wave?"

Peewee laughed, not unkindly. "Two feet," he said.

THERE are no such waves in my world now. On summer weekends, I surf Fire Island, where conditions are most often ridiculous, never very good, certainly never scary. I find myself copying out a passage from "Beyond Good and Evil." "We moderns, we half-barbarians," Nietzsche writes. "We are in the midst of our bliss only when we are most in danger." I remember, ambivalently, that bliss. Surf kitsch, meanwhile, is everywhere. The Mutant Ninja Turtles shout "Cowabunga!" and somebody's T-shirt on Central Park West touts "Surfeteria, A Bar and Restaurant for Retired Surfers" over a long list of California surf spots. I follow the T-shirt down the street, trying to read the list. I realize I've surfed every spot on it. Why is my youth being recycled as farce this way? And in such rapacious detail! In France, I discover, any product that can possibly be packaged in a surfing motif is. Cigarettes, cars, cognac—all invoke *le surf.* Even the national-lottery game cards for a while featured an image of a surfer on a wave.

On late-night television, I stumble upon a surfing contest. Two red-hot kids are tearing apart one-foot waves in conditions that can only be described as funkdog. They are, moreover, hassling one another, each paddling around frantically trying to trick the other into committing "interference"—a call by the judges which apparently costs one valuable points. The waves are not worth riding, let alone hassling for. And the announcer gets everything wrong, calling maneuvers by the wrong names, getting excited over ordinary moves while overlooking extraordinary ones, and, in the midst of his misnarration, taking journalistic indirection to new heights: "And the California regular-footer and former world champion pulls a radical roller coaster here at the United States Surfing Championships at Huntington Beach, California." He keeps calling his color co-host "Robert Bartholomew," and the co-host, a great Australian surfer known as *Rabbit* Bartholomew, never bothers to correct him. Neither does Bartholomew bother to point out that the surf we are watching is contemptible. It's obviously part of the deal that he must pretend that this



WE ONLY SEE WHAT WE WANT TO SEE.

obscene parody of surfing is very exciting. I remember surfing with Bartholomew at his home break in Queensland when he was doing things on waves that the rest of us could not yet comprehend. I comprehend him too well tonight.

The surf magazines have discovered San Francisco—partly through the efforts of Mark, who started editing a medical-advice column for *Surfer* shortly after founding, at a conference he organized in Fiji, the Surfers' Medical Association. His views and big-surf exploits have become a staple item in the magazine's regional columns. Young surfers all dream of seeing themselves in the surf mags, and it seems that Mark has finally found, in middle age, a way to get himself in. Aaron Plank, the hottest young surfer in San Francisco, made it in through the front door: a phenomenal fourteen-frame sequence in which he is completely hidden from view for seven frames—about four seconds—and then emerges cleanly from a double-overhead Ocean Beach left. This sequence was part of a 1990 *Surfer* article about San Francisco that smelled to me like the end of an era. The whole surfing world knows about Ocean Beach now. There is even, I am told, an annual pro surfing contest at VFW's.

But the strangest news I've had of San Francisco through *Surfer*—to which I still subscribe—was a paean to Peewee, by Mark. "Quiet, seemingly egoless, he draws little attention to himself—until he paddles out and goes off," Mark writes. "Best spot on the beach—Peewee's there. Best wave of the set—Peewee's on it. Best wave of the day—Peewee got it." Mark compares Peewee to Clint Eastwood, and the famous fin-busting incident is mentioned.

I was wrong, by the way, to fear Mark's reaction to the news that I was leaving San Francisco. He never missed a beat. He hasn't passed up any opportunities since then, though, to let me know about all the great waves I'm missing at Ocean Beach, where last winter was surely the best in living memory, or on the various surf trips I've inexplicably declined to join him on—to Indonesia, Costa Rica, Fiji, Scotland. When I last spoke to him, earlier this month, he had just returned from Alaska, where he had chartered a plane, explored hundreds of miles of coast, and, near the foot of a glacier, discovered and surfed magnificent waves, alone, off a beach marked with fresh grizzly tracks.

The last time I was in San Francisco, I went by Wise's shop and found the same crew lounging around the counter, telling many of the same stories. The photographs of Mark on the wall had multiplied, however, into dozens of well-framed, captioned shots of various locals surfing big Ocean Beach. It seemed that Mark and company had founded a new club—the Double Overhead Association. To be a D.O.A. member, you had to provide a picture of yourself on an Ocean Beach wave that was at least double-overhead. The pictures went up on Wise's wall. I half wished I could join, and I was pleased to see that a photograph I had taken—of Edwin Salem on a huge, rainy day south of Sloat—was up there. I looked for the beautiful shot of Peewee at Outside VFW's, but it was gone. Wise said he didn't know what had become of it.

On the wall by my desk in New York a photograph hangs: me half crouched inside a slate-gray barrel off Noriega Street, Ocean Beach. Mark gave Caroline the photograph; she had it framed for my birthday. It's a great shot, but it frustrates me to look at it, because the photographer fired an instant too soon. Just after the moment recorded by the camera, I disappeared into the wave. That's the shot I covet: the wave alone, with the knowledge that I am in there, drawing a high line behind the thick, pouring, silver-beaded curtain. That invisible passage, not this moment of anticipation, was the heart of the ride. But pictures are not about what a ride felt like; they are about what it looked like to others. This picture shows a dark sea; my memory of that wave is drenched with silver light. That's because I was looking south while I navigated its depths, and as I slipped through its brilliant almond eye back into the world.

—WILLIAM FINNEGAN

(*This is the second part of a two-part article.*)

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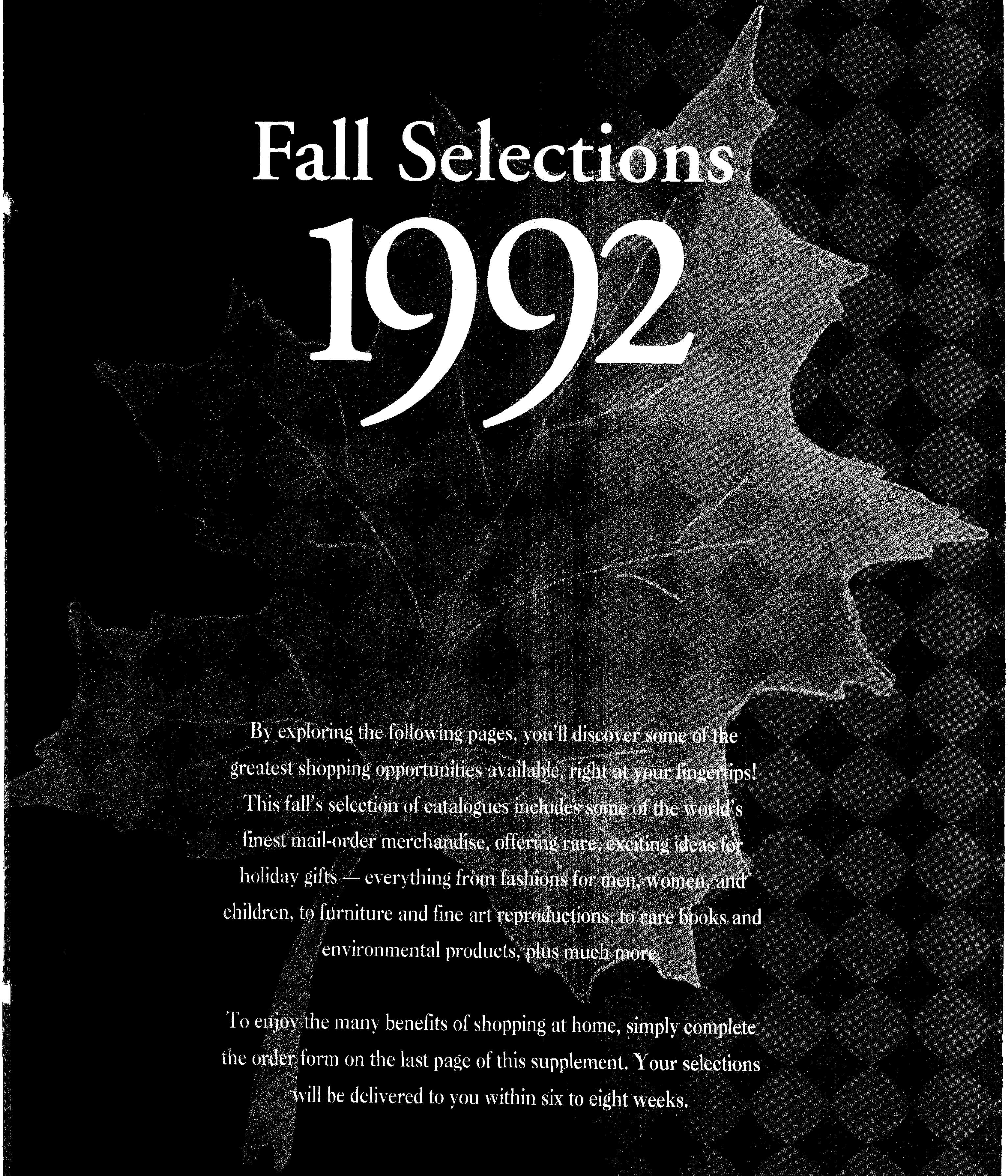

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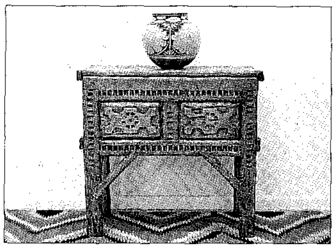

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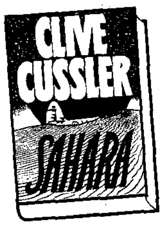

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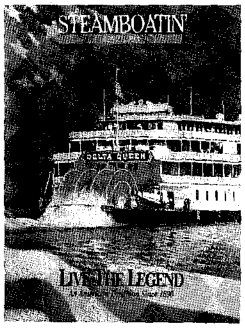

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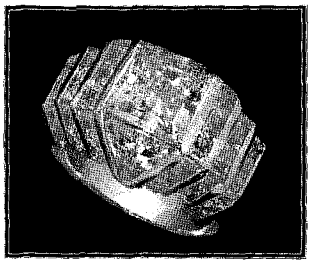

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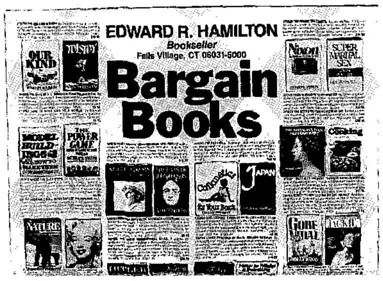
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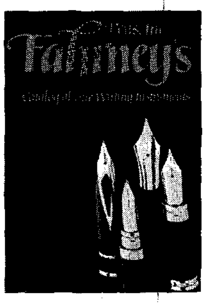

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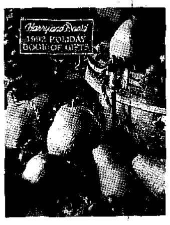

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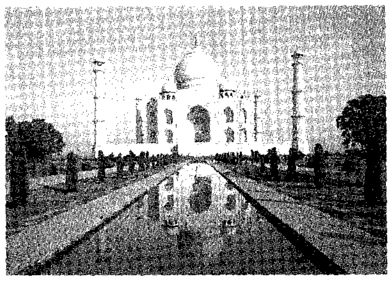

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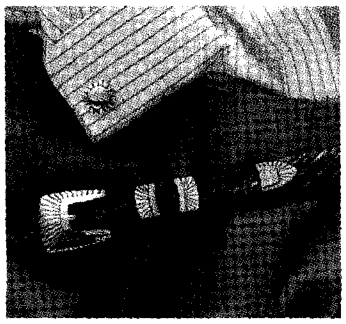

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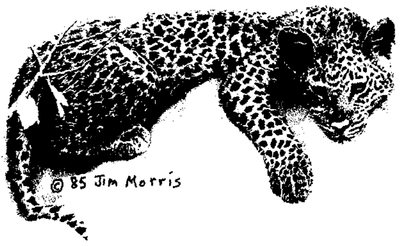

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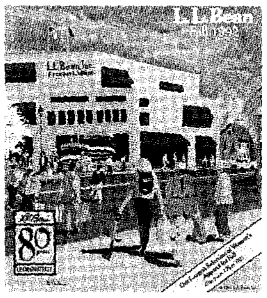

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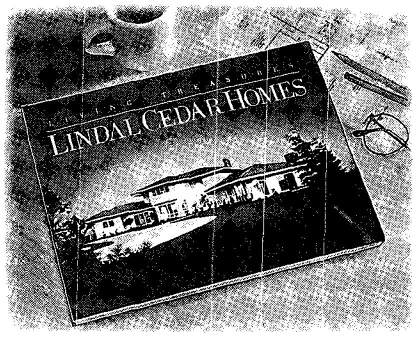

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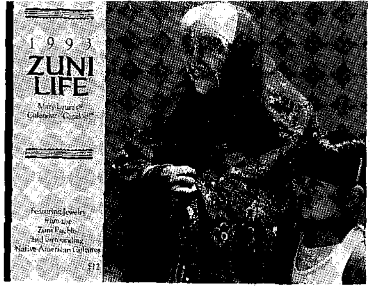
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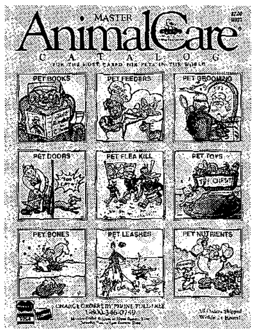

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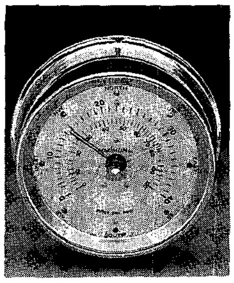

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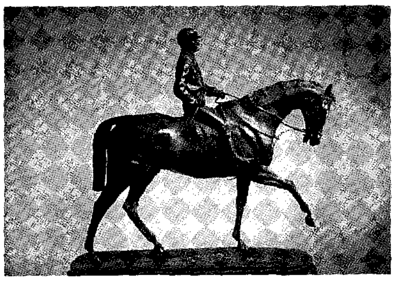

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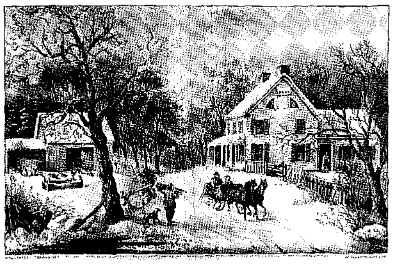
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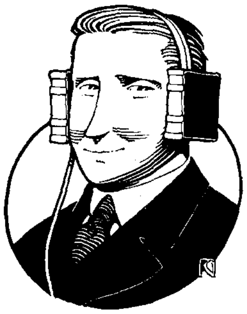

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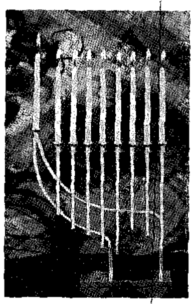

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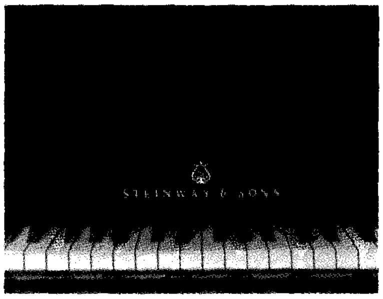

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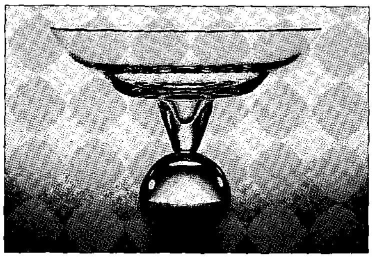

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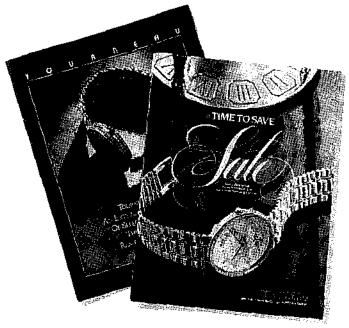

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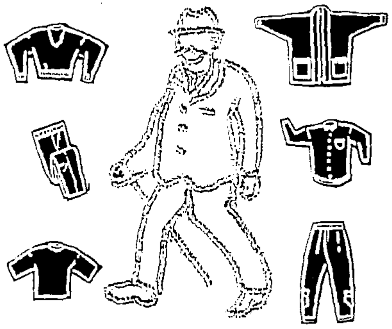

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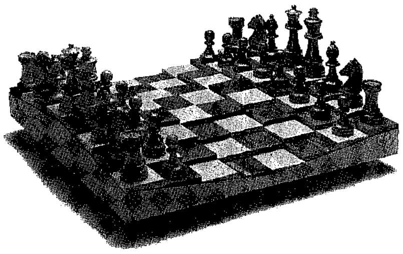

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THE SKY LINE

Hazards of Bigness

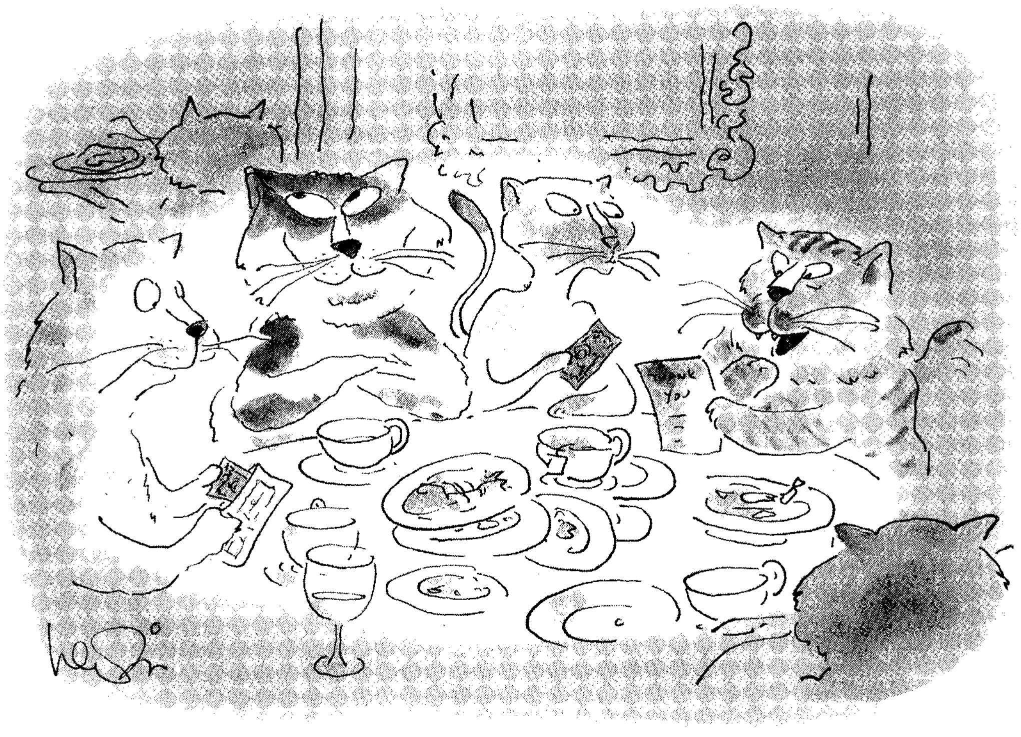
TWO principles—or, rather, two suppositions that, with time, have hardened into principles—confront each other in New York City. One principle is that in order for a city to prosper it must expand: growth is a proof of health, and is always to be encouraged. The second principle, which emerges from the first, is that if funds aren't available to provide those additions to the city's infrastructure which continuous growth requires, the local bureaucracy will be permitted to ignore the problem. The bureaucracy may even ignore the task of maintaining the infrastructure already in place, which, being of a certain age, may be unable to assume, within its accustomed margin of safety, an extra burden of wear and tear. "Make do" and "Out of sight, out of mind" are maxims cherished by politicians; an infrastructure is by nature largely invisible, and nobody is likely to notice what dangerous shape it is in until it rots away or falls down.

Little evidence exists to support the conviction that a city must grow in order to remain healthy. On the contrary, there is plenty of evidence that continuous growth creates an unresolvable urban paradox: the greater the number of a city's inhabitants, the more uninhabitable the city becomes. Mexico City, for example, with a current population of some twenty million, threatens by the year 2000 to have a population of twenty-eight million, which will make it by far the largest city in the world. By then, experts predict, its already heavily polluted air will have become unbreathable, it will have exhausted its water supplies, and it will have no means of disposing of its gigantic accumulations of sewage and garbage.

No such grim fate need befall New York City, yet it could easily do so. Until the nearly total collapse, two years ago, of the eighties' building boom, city officials were eager to make every possible concession to real-estate developers, and, accordingly, the developers were constructing bigger and bigger buildings on sites more and more inappropriate to them. The concessions included hundreds of millions of dollars in tax abatements; variances with respect to zoning and other long-established regulations; and a quick approval of environmental-impact statements that were often fiction. With the assistance of an accommodating press (for years, certain local newspapers customarily published verbatim in their real-estate sections press releases furnished to them by developers), the average citizen of New York was encouraged to believe that private entrepreneurs like Donald Trump and Peter Kalikow were public benefactors. It was invariably pointed out in their behalf that every new structure they put up meant an increase in the total property value of the city, and that in the course of its construction immense sums in the form of wages and materials were generated for the building trades. But what of the debit side, to which the average citizen has enjoyed little or no access? What do new structures cost taxpayers when it comes to supplying police and fire protection, collecting garbage, disposing of sewage, providing public transportation, maintaining streets, and preventing air pollution? In terms of what people commonly call the quality of life, what do the citizens of New York actually gain for their sacrifice of fresh air, sunlight, and ease of movement?

Yet if the average taxpayer were to be made aware of these hidden costs—to the point where, say, a particular new structure could be shown to represent a net loss to the city instead of a net gain—how would he respond? Not necessarily in a rational fashion, to the advantage of his pocketbook and his health. When Trump announced in 1985 that he was planning to build the tallest building in the world on a parcel of land he had bought in the West Fifties and Sixties, the general public appeared delighted with the news; in TV, radio, and press interviews, many New Yorkers were vociferously of the opinion that New York, being the greatest city on earth, should possess the tallest building. The Sears skyscraper in upstart Chicago having impertinently surpassed the Empire State Building and the World Trade Center in height, wasn't it more than time that we got the title back?

Something like this kind of reasoning about the goodness of bigness lay behind the enthusiasm for every new office skyscraper that went up in the eighties, and may well lead to a showering of praise upon a five-hundred-and-forty-five-foot skyscraper that is about to rise on the trapezoidal block bounded by Sixty-seventh Street, Broadway, Sixty-eighth Street, and Colum-



"*Let's see, who had the canary?*"

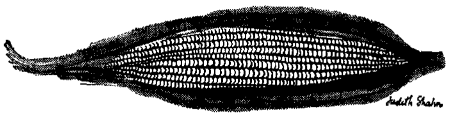
bus Avenue. The site is only a block away from Lincoln Center, and in order for the new building to acquire lustre from the center's cultural ambience it will be called Lincoln Square. (Since the crisscross of streets and avenues a block or so to the south is already known as Lincoln Square, the oddity of a Lincoln Square not on Lincoln Square will take some getting used to.)

Now, it is hard to imagine any structure less suitable for a comparatively small block in that severely congested area than a five-hundred-and-forty-five-foot skyscraper. Zoning at the site permits a building containing ten times the square footage of the plot; the plot intended for the Lincoln Square building covers fifty-five thousand five hundred square feet, so the building, "as of right," can contain five hundred and fifty-five thousand square feet. The building will also contain a hundred and eleven thousand usable square feet "below grade," which isn't counted in the total square footage of the permissible envelope. And still more square footage has been granted to the building as a consequence of the "inclusionary bonus" that the developers earned by constructing low-income housing several years ago on 104th and 107th Streets—a bonus amounting to two hundred and fifty-nine thousand square feet, any portion of which they are entitled to transfer to any property owned by them elsewhere in the same district—in this case, Community District 7. The developers have chosen to add a hundred and eleven thousand square feet of the bonus to the Sixty-seventh Street structure, giving it a grand total of seven hundred and seventy-five thousand square feet—roughly three-quarters the size of the Chrysler Building.

Taking advantage of legal dodges provided under the rubric of "as of right," the architectural firms of Kohn Pedersen Fox and Schuman Lichtenstein Claman Efron have designed a building that will be grossly overscaled for the "footprint" it is to occupy. To make matters worse, the Lincoln Square building will be—as David W. Dunlap, writing in the *Times*, has said—"one of the most mixed mixed-use structures that New York City is ever likely to see." The mixture will be an exceptionally busy one, since the building will be made up not only of several hundred apartments in its thirty-eight upper stories but of an eight-story-high commercial base containing a complex of ten movie theatres, seating almost four thousand people; two or three apparel shops; a bookshop; a music shop; a sports center, with a swimming pool, a running track, and squash and volleyball courts; and perhaps (the developers have released contradictory information on this aspect of the project) new quarters for the Ansonia branch of the Post Office, which is now in a building just south of the plot, and which would not only occupy some forty thousand square feet of the new building but add its fleet of constantly arriving and departing mail trucks to the vehicular traffic in the neighborhood.

This immense structure, with its thousands of occupants, will rise only a stone's throw away from the Upper West Side/Central Park West Historic District, which runs up the east side of Columbus Avenue at Sixty-seventh Street and is extended to Broadway on the north side of Sixty-eighth Street. Is it credible that the building will have *no environmental impact* upon that district and its inhabitants? The major subway stop nearest to the building is at Seventy-second Street and Broadway—a stop so continuously overcrowded that it has been a subject of irritated community protest ever since it opened, in 1904.

New York City has long violated federal standards with respect to its air, and has secured one unjustified delay after another in complying with them. The area in and around Lincoln Center is already one of the worst sites of air pollution in the five boroughs. Yet in the view of many urban planners the most vexatious problem in the entire neighborhood is that of sewage disposal. If the North River Sewage Treatment Plant, situated along the Hudson between 137th and 145th Streets, is already at capacity—and there are a number of people living up and down the West Side who passionately believe that it is often over capacity and is pouring millions of gallons of raw sewage daily into the Hudson—is it possible that a building with thousands of occupants will not add to the pollution of the Hudson? But, because the proposed building has been cunningly designed to be "as of right," the usual means by which the community informs itself about a project and proceeds to pass judgment on it—the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure, known as ULURP for short—doesn't apply to this one. No public hearings and no environmental-impact statement have been required for Lincoln Square; a construction permit has been granted by the Buildings Department, and already bulldozers have carved a deep hole in the ground on the eastern part of the block, and concrete has been poured for the footings upon which the steel skeleton of the structure will stand.



A number of neighborhood organizations are determined to prevent the erection of Lincoln Square. Their hopes of doing so lie in the part that the branch post office is scheduled to play in the project. In the original Lincoln Square proposal, a new branch post office was included, but then it became apparent that a special zoning permit would be required for the post office's off-street loading bays, and this requirement would oblige the project to submit to the usual ULURP scrutiny; the post office was dropped and the Buildings Department made haste to give the project its blessing. But in correspondence with community leaders post-office representatives have since affirmed that they are indeed involved in the project and the necessary environmental-impact notice has already been filed.

The developers, a group called Millennium Partners, appear to believe that they can outwit the community, thanks in part to having kept the project secret up to the last possible moment (even the borough president's office was repeatedly denied access to the plans for the project before the Buildings Department approved them) and in part to some more or less covert assistance from well-placed political friends. The facts that have emerged so far are ugly, if unsurprising. As the state legislative session drew to a hectic close in late June, a bill was quietly introduced by Bronx Assemblyman George Friedman and Queens State Senator Frank Padavan that would have given a special tax break to the Lincoln Square project. Although the bill took care not to name a specific project, it was worded to apply only to residential and commercial developments on the West Side of Manhattan that would begin construction between June 1st and June 30th. As one might surmise, the only such project was

Lincoln Square. It was assumed that the bill would pass in the usual end-of-session rush, but State Senator Manfred Ohrenstein noticed it in time to alert Assemblyman Jerrold Nadler, and he took care to have it defeated.

Early in July, Community Board 7 held a crowded meeting at the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue, on West Sixty-seventh Street, at which Philip Aarons, one of the developers of the project, was subjected to scores of hostile questions about the building and also about the tax break that he and his partners had been seeking for the project—not only from the legislature in Albany but also, reputedly, from the City Council. According to a press report of the meeting, Mr. Aarons admitted having "contacted a high official in the city government." With what intentions and to what effect he apparently omitted to say. Meanwhile, construction of the Lincoln Square project proceeds on schedule.

IF a behemoth of a skyscraper on Sixty-seventh Street strikes many residents of the West Side as ideally unsuitable in its scale, its uses, and its impact on the environment, what of the much larger project called Riverside South, which also happens to fall within the jurisdiction of Community Board 7? This is a project to develop the so-called Trump railroad site, which faces the Hudson River between Fifty-ninth Street and Seventy-second Street—a parcel of land amounting to almost seventy-five acres, some eighteen of which are underwater but are still of high value, as being capable of development in the form of piers and other over-water structures and as adding to the footprint and therefore the permissible bulk of buildings on dry land. (It was here, on the largest undeveloped site in Manhattan, that Trump had proposed to erect the tallest building on earth—a hundred-and-fifty-story tower, accompanied by half a dozen acolyte towers of a mere seventy stories or so. Responding to impassioned neighborhood objections, Trump withdrew his proposal.) The most notable benefit offered by the new plan is a twenty-one-acre waterfront park, to be made possible, however, by the radical redesign and reconstruction of the present elevated Miller Highway—which, after years of deterioration, is currently being rebuilt, at a cost of tens of millions of dollars, and would have to be torn down

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as soon as the rebuilding was completed.

Other drawbacks to Riverside South are varied and obvious, and are well known to its sponsor, the Riverside South Planning Corporation, which is a not-for-profit organization chaired by Richard Kahan. (It was Kahan who in the early eighties was placed in charge of that super-muddle the Battery Park City project, and presided over its successful redesign and execution.) The stated purpose of the Riverside South Planning Corporation is to link "private, environmental, community, and civic interests to the goal of building an economically viable and environmentally sustainable project." The statement goes on, "To re-create the character of New York's best-known neighborhoods, Riverside South will feature residential towers with street-level retail shops," and it will be "divided into fifteen separate development parcels, designed to reflect the street and building patterns of the surrounding community and subject to stringent design controls for use, access, bulk, height, setbacks, and landscaping." If the statement lacks specificity, the partners in the organization do not; six of them are esteemed civic bodies—the Municipal Art Society, the Parks Council, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Regional Plan Association, the Riverside Park Fund, and Westpride. A seventh partner is the ever-aggressive Trump, who is said today to be kept under close fiscal observation by the banks that lent him the means by which he accumulated his extensive real-estate kingdom. Trump would ordinarily be thought to be an adversary of his high-minded partners; it is presumed that he has chosen to coöperate with them in order to bring one of the costliest of his many misadventures—he paid a hundred and fifteen million dollars for the property in 1985 and has been paying millions of dollars annually in taxes ever since—back from the brink of total failure.

The partners in Riverside South argue that their plan should be adopted on the never very satisfactory premise that the alternatives would be worse (as several previous proposals assuredly were). But they also argue that the plan demonstrates how private and public interests, pooling their resources, can resolve certain universal urban problems; in doing so, they say, the plan will serve as a model elsewhere in the city, state, and nation.

Two commonly accepted false assumptions go unremarked in this argument, however, and deserve to be mentioned: one is the assumption that making our city bigger is indispensable to making it better, and the other is that arranging for a handful of real-estate operators, banks, and insurance companies to become richer makes the rest of us richer as well. It is acknowledged that Riverside South will place a heavy burden upon the overtaxed infrastructure of the city. It will add a minimum of ten thousand residents and six or seven thousand workers to an area that already lacks adequate public transportation. Like the Lincoln Square project, it will depend for transportation largely upon the already jam-packed West Seventy-second Street subway station. And what of air pollution? Nothing of substance has been said on that topic, save that sooner or later the city as a whole must buckle down and come to terms with it. Sewage disposal? If the North River Sewage Treatment Plant is frequently full to the brim and is continuously polluting the air over hundreds of acres of West Harlem, how on earth can it be expected to accept as much as a teacup more of raw sewage and wastewater? It cannot, and so the Riverside South Planning Corporation has in mind a couple of different methods of dealing with the sewage and wastewater it will generate. One method would be to build its own sewage-disposal plant on site (putting it, for aesthetic reasons, under the new waterfront park or under the highway that is to bisect the park). The other would be to hook into the North River plant but to make sure that the flow of water and sewage through the plant would be held at or below its present level by the use at Riverside South of state-of-the-art plumbing fixtures, requiring a minimum of water, and by retrofitting the plumbing fixtures of thousands of nearby apartment houses and private dwellings to reduce their flow by an amount equivalent to that created at Riverside South. This process of retrofitting would have the advantage of beginning to resolve one of our perennial urban difficulties—the extravagant amount of water currently being consumed by New Yorkers. The city is striving to reduce this amount by the installation of water meters, which will be accompanied in the near future by a formidable increase in water rates. (Meters encourage people to use less water, but the rise in rates is a separate phenomenon and will swallow up any savings achieved by metering.) Officials expect the rate increase to prompt howls of protest, which will be followed by a widespread demand for the retrofitting of plumbing fixtures throughout the city. But how such a general retrofitting should be financed—whether in part by the city or wholly by individual property owners—remains at the moment undetermined.

Unlike the monstrous Sixty-seventh Street tower, Riverside South has always been subject to the hurdles of ULURP. In late July, Community Board 7 rejected the Riverside South proposal by a vote of thirty-five to one. Though the powers vested in Community Boards are advisory, and not binding in law, they tend to have a strong effect upon public officials. One day after the nearly unanimous vote of disapproval by Community Board 7, Ruth W. Messinger, borough president of Manhattan, announced that she would be unwilling to support the project in the form submitted to her. Ms. Messinger, who enjoys a reputation for independence of spirit and would almost certainly have raised objections to the plan in any event (she had strongly opposed earlier plans for the site), would insist that there be no net increase in the flow of sewage to the North River Sewage Treatment Plant; that there be "more specific guarantees" in respect to the housing that is to be made available at below-market costs; that the park be constructed "along with and not years after" the buildings proposed in the plan; and that the builders' obligations be made absolutely clear in writing.

Of the four points raised by Ms. Messinger, by far the most critical was the question of sewage. Back in June, the city, for the first time in its history, was sued in the State Supreme Court for creating a nuisance caused by smells. A consortium of Harlem residents and community groups filed a suit charging that foul odors resulting from the "intentional, unreasonable, negligent, reckless, and abnormally dangerous siting, design, construction, and operation" of the North River plant force residents of West Harlem to keep their windows closed on even the hottest

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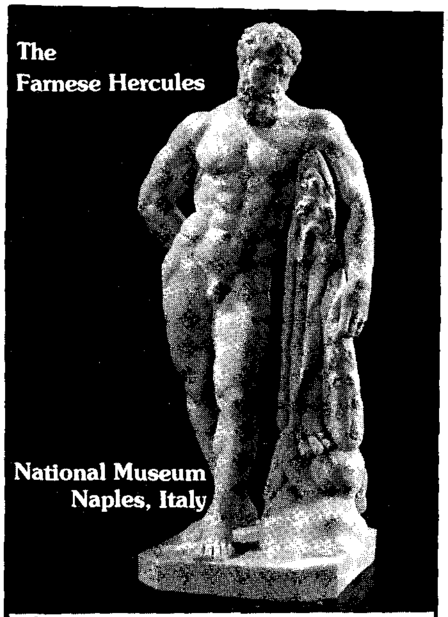

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summer days and discourage them from visiting the nearby sections of Riverside Park. The suit goes on to assert that the earliest studies for the plant had recommended that it be located along the Hudson shore from Fifty-seventh Street to Sixty-third Street, and that this site was abandoned in favor of the site eighty blocks upstream because the predominantly white, politically influential residents of the West Sixties had raised highly audible "not in my back yard" objections to the proposal.

Ironically, the lawsuit over the plant's odors comes at a time when the city is being governed by a man who for many years fought hard to prevent the plant from being, as he used to put it angrily, "dumped" on the minorities living in West Harlem. Now Mayor Dinkins and his Environmental Protection Commissioner, Albert F. Appleton, argue that the lawsuit is gratuitous, if not downright silly, because they have been doing their best to solve the manifold problems of the plant, though so far in vain. According to some sewage-plant experts, the prevalence of foul odors isn't related to the fact that the plant is at (or possibly over) capacity, but what it *is* related to appears to depend upon which expert one speaks to. Meanwhile, a twenty-eight-acre recreational park is being completed on the roof deck of the plant, which is to be reached by broad vehicular and pedestrian bridges over the Henry Hudson Parkway. An amenity plainly intended to make Harlem residents feel better about having been taken harsh advantage of, the park is often, for all its potential beauty and usefulness, unvisitable. Even the river's gulls seem to turn up their bills at using it for perching purposes.

The North River Sewage Treatment Plant, built at a cost of well over a billion dollars, is one of the most recent additions to the city's infrastructure. Given that so much of that infrastructure, in the form of bridges, water mains, highways, and the like, is ancient and decaying, the plant might have been expected to prove an occasion for applause. Instead, by ill luck, it has become a symbol of the recklessness of incessant urban expansion.

AT a public hearing held by order of Borough President Messinger on August 3rd, in the auditorium of the Martin Luther King High School, a block or so east of the Trump site, scores of residents of the West Side community voiced their objections to the Riverside South plan, and an almost equal number of residents spoke in its favor. As is usually the case at such hearings, the objectors evinced far more emotion than the advocates; prophets of doom tend to be more excitable than givers of praise. The following day, a second public hearing was held, in the old Board of Estimate chamber in City Hall. Nine separate panels of interested parties were invited to discuss in sequence, over a period of several hours, park planning, sewage treatment, affordable housing, economic development, and other topics pertaining to Riverside South. A member of the audience said afterward that in his experience it was the first time that the quality of discourse in the chamber had equalled the high quality of its architecture.

Even opponents of the Riverside South Planning Corporation admire its willingness to make its case publicly and to debate the pros and cons with candor. It has given over six hundred briefings to elected city officials, community leaders, and neighbors of the project, and it has placed on exhibition a large three-dimensional model of the project, built by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, the project's supervising architects. (The model vividly demonstrates how colossal the project will be; several of the buildings will be between forty and forty-nine stories high.) Riverside South seems to accept as a necessary good the task of explaining how it came to make this decision and not that, and to confess that certain critical decisions aren't yet capable of being made; they hover, as it were, in the middle distance, at the mercy of events political and economic whose outcome no reasonable person would dare to predict.

It has been estimated that it will take at least ten or fifteen years to complete Riverside South and that its total cost (in today's dollars) will come to around three billion dollars. The real-estate entrepreneurs who will build it stand to earn a return of at least fifteen per cent on their money, which is to say a minimum of four or five hundred million dollars. It is fair to ask what the average New Yorker will be likely to gain from the project. A pretty little park, which will be enjoyed mostly by the ten or twenty thousand people who live and work within close range of it. What else? Surely there must be fifty or a hundred other benefits that could be mentioned, which would balance those seemingly ineradicable drawbacks to the project that have been noted here and that even its advocates honorably confess they have found no way of mitigating. Not so? Then why should the project be built? Why should the city persist in expanding when it cannot afford to sustain itself at its present levels of size and density? Why should we not consent to endure—for once, out of prudence, and not lethargy—a period of postponement, by means of which some seventy acres of our most precious land would be reserved for use at some future time by *all* the citizens of New York? Let Trump sell the property to the city at a low price, or give it to the city, and gain fame by being among the most generous of our benefactors.

The imperative to keep on building enormous new structures in an already overbuilt and overburdened city is an illusion, and was never a more hazardous one than it is now. If we fail to deal successfully with our sewage, if we are wholly at a loss to know what to do with our garbage (save to send it around the country by train, seeking day after day an isolated spot in which to hide it), if we continue to violate our existing standards in respect to air and light, how dare we go on adding to the fabric of the city? Why do we not perceive that the only real-estate development appropriate to our situation, whether today or in the foreseeable future, is the task of renewing the fabric of the city as we already possess it: in the anonymous, long-sustained, intelligently designed, and modestly profitable reconstruction of a housing stock (one thinks especially of Harlem and the South Bronx) that covers much of the most desirable acreage in the city and is already well supplied with public transportation and other necessary services—and is also, more from habitual bureaucratic inertia than from habitual bureaucratic venality, falling every day into greater and more nearly irreparable ruin? The French have a phrase, *la folie de bâtir*—an irresistible impulse to go on building, beyond one's needs and whether one can pay for it or not. It is an affliction that we New Yorkers are especially subject to and must learn to oppose as if our lives depended upon it. For they do.

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MUSICAL EVENTS

Sorrows and Beggars

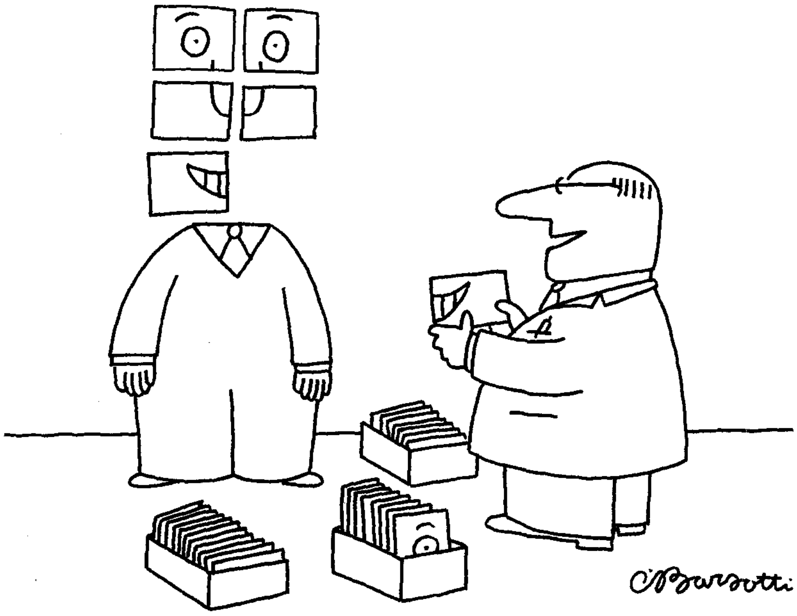
THERE are two stories to Goethe's early novel "The Sorrows of Young Werther": the tale it told when it was published, in 1774, and the subsequent history of imitations and derivatives that has wound out from it. At first, the imitations were extravagantly and appallingly direct. Werther, suffering the agonies of love and killing himself rather than go on without his Lotte, was taken as a model by contemporary young bloods, for whom the final pistol shot was the only acceptable proof of passionate commitment. So art dealt back to life what it had taken, since Goethe had based the book partly on the suicide of a friend in similar circumstances. Then came the echoes in art itself, especially the art of opera: after a century, Massenet's "Werther" (1892), and, after another, Hans-Jürgen von Bose's piece, with Goethe's full title, a work that had its first performance at the Schwetzingen Festival six years ago and its American première at Santa Fe earlier this month.

The calamity of Werther must owe its continuing appeal to its epitomization of the Romantic temperament, for here is a man whose feelings are so important to him that they outweigh not only the emotions of everyone else around but any other value in life at all. (This total belief in his own responses—this living always in the emotional present—may be what makes Werther such a likely operatic character.) The case is all the sharper for the lack of any judgment on it from the author. The novel is presented largely as a sequence of letters from Werther to a friend, so that the voice we hear is almost continuously his. It's a voice gushing with sentiment, and never for a moment doubting its claim on the auditor's sympathy. But it's not addressed in the first place to the novel's readers, and the careful chronological assembly of the letters, by the friend, after events have unfolded to their conclusion, suggests an exercise of forensic dispassion. The heat is there in what Werther writes, the cold in the laying out of these missives from the heart. So one can take the book, as W. H. Auden took it, for a condemnation of egotism, not a rhapsodic eulogy.

Mr. von Bose seems to regard his opera as having a similar distance from the subject, if in a different sense. In a note for the Santa Fe program book he writes interestingly of the story's hold on him. He imagines himself "sitting on another planet looking through a huge telescope watching a . . . landscape wherein single, loosely connected scenes of the novel took place." And he goes on to emphasize the strangeness of the tale, and therefore his own apartness from it, which at the time of composition he found intensely worrying. In the theatre, though, this wasn't how it seemed, partly because of differences between opera and literature as genres. A character can be presumed to have written his own letters, and therefore to be speaking for himself, not the author. But it's much less easy to feel that an operatic Werther is singing his own song: the author—the composer—is always implied. And though there are ways in which operatic characters can appear to be going on independently of their composer, Mr. von Bose seems not at all so alienated from Werther and Lotte as his telescope image would suggest.

On the contrary, the music gives every indication of feeling Werther's emotions as keenly and exclusively as he does. When Lotte tells him she's engaged, high woodwinds and brass yelp and scowl with pain; when, later in the same scene, she gives him leave to visit her again the next day, the pit wells up with jubilant bell sounds. The language, not so different in this respect from Massenet's, is one of lyrical endorsement, and the only evidence of estrangement between composer and subject lies in the work's nostalgia: its nostalgia for Romantic idealism, and its nostalgia for a particularly German Romanticism of fervent youthful passion (male passion, as it generally has to be) that finds its mirror more in the world of nature than in that of men and women. Mr. von Bose's stage directions mark out how Werther's story develops with the cycle of the seasons; his hero, like those of Mahler or Schubert, is a solitary wanderer through the natural scene.

The sensibility here is an adolescent one, and "The Sorrows of Young Werther" is decidedly a young man's opera. Born in 1953, Mr. von Bose was just past thirty when he wrote it, and its generous, coursing sympathy with the hero is that of comradely identification. It also seeks, in an engagingly puppyish manner, to please its audience with the greatest possible variety of musical-dramatic capers. Werther's thoughts and feelings exist in fluid communion with the siren songs of unseen voices—a "madrigal quintet,"whose amplified singing seems to come out of the air, as if the air itself were responding to the central character. The Intermezzo, covering the interlude in which Werther takes himself away from Lotte, is deliberately bizarre, and even grotesque, with one



"You've been very patient, Mr. Robertson, but we're about finished, and you'll be on your way in a moment."

song mimed to a recording made in twenties popular-song style (not a very convincing fabrication) and a Handelian aria also done in dumb show to a tape. The ball scene of the first act requires pastiche of a different kind, more integrated into the action, and the opera's quick play of vignettes—two dozen of them in a work that lasts for little more than an hour and a half—provides opportunities for diverse and beautiful moments. One is the tree music—a soft-textured gentle hum for clarinets, bassoons, and low strings—in a scene there to remind Werther of the short duration of human consciousness. Another is the fragile high-tenor song for the mad boy Heinrich, seeking flowers in winter for his beloved: here again, as in the novel, everything Werther sees is a reminder of his own emotional state, that all-encompassing solipsism being the essence of the Romantic condition.

But if the opera's eager variousness is that of its youthful composer (perhaps moderated in his second full-scale opera, "63: Dream Palace"), the work has its place, too, in other histories than his, and not only in the history of "Werther" dramatizations but also in that of contemporary German Romanticism. For Mr. von Bose's nostalgia is not his alone. His cherishing of emotional suffering and his exuberant use of the orchestra both point toward Henze as his musical godfather; Henze-like as well is his ability to project a Romantic story with musical and dramatic means that belong to a post-Romantic age, such as the Intermezzo's parodies and the full charge of noise percussion that erupts now and then. In this belated Romanticism is also his kinship with Berg—in this and in the rapid succession of short scenes, the flick from one to another speeding up as the catastrophe approaches. One can understand why Santa Fe, with its outstanding tradition of Berg and Henze premières, should now have come to von Bose.

The realization could hardly have done more for the piece, and here Kurt Ollmann's central performance must have first mention. The focus of attention almost throughout, he had the overwhelming responsibility for making us see Werther as a tragic hero and not a "horrid little monster" (Auden)—and thereby for giving the work a gravity it could easily have missed. He also had to deliver some tricky lines,

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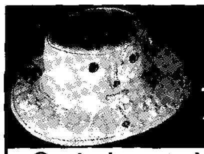
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including what must count among the riskiest of second-act openers: "How glad I am to be here once more!" (I'd guess that the original libretto—abstracted from the novel by the composer in collaboration with the designer-director Filippo Sanjust, and including quotations from Hölderlin and Lenz—contributes more than Santa Fe's translation did to the German Romantic atmosphere.) The opera is Werther's. In one of its best inventions, it begins with him coming onstage and singing a rising fifth, from which a whole unaccompanied line unfolds, to be joined by the invisible airy voices and then by a solo oboe. Right from this moment, Mr. Ollmann was compelling: fully in character, singing with radiant strength of purpose and clarity, using all a lieder artist's skill and sensitivity to make word and tone into the singleness of lyrical declamation.

His Lotte, in this opera, has barely more than a supporting role, which is perhaps Mr. von Bose's just comment on the hero's self-absorption. As she remarks, in the novel and in the opera, Werther would not be in love with her if she were not unavailable; Mr. von Bose in his commentary goes further (and here again the intricacy isn't actualized in the opera), to suggest that Werther "does not commit suicide for a good reason but is looking for a good reason to commit suicide." Charlotte Hellekant sang the part of the hapless instrument with agility and brightness: what we saw and heard was Werther's image of Lotte, vivacious and teasing, but yielding little clue to her feeling for Werther, because to him that isn't important.

One respect in which this opera significantly departs from the novel is in its portrayal of Lotte's fiancé, Albert, later her husband. In the book, he's a dull fellow, Werther's rival not so much for Lotte's affection as in philosophical debates that allow the one's ardent individualism to contrast with the other's sound sense of social order. Mr. von Bose cuts these discussions almost entirely, and leaves Albert as a bogeyman who pops up to curtail any dalliance between Werther and Lotte. Jake Gardner offered an appropriately bleak, snipped performance in a wretched part. Singers who had fuller challenges and opportunities included Jeffrey Reynolds, making a sad-graceful flight of Heinrich's scene, and Mark Thomsen—a necessarily stouter tenor, but still fleet, in the nature of the work—as the unnamed Peasant, who takes a robuster axe to his own triangle of love, killing his usurper, not himself.

On the opening night, the skies were listening in, and lashed the opera toward its close with a thunderstorm. But the orchestra, under George Manahan, sounded tentative, as if dealing with an unfamiliar idiom; it was much better at the second performance, when the quick interchange of instrumental groupings had beauty and logic. The stage production was sure from the start. Bruno Schwengl's set was a wall of even mid-blue right across the stage, with doorways at either side for entrances and exits, and in the middle great double doors that could open to reveal particular scenes: the music room for Lotte, Albert, and domestic life, emblematic exteriors of summer trees and winter snow. Francesca Zambello, the director, thus had the geometry to deal with Werther's imaginings in a forward space and, in the recessed cubicle, with his rare participations in reality—though that may be too stiff a way to interpret an opera so much about borderlands, and a production that matched the work's fluidity and self-sustaining energy.

ALONGSIDE "The Sorrows of Young Werther" Santa Fe was presenting two other works of Romantic retrospection, both in revivals, and both conducted by John Crosby with a want of urge and glamour: "Der Rosenkavalier" and "Die Fledermaus." The chief distinction of the former was Susanne Mentzer's Octavian. She doesn't have much the look of a lad, but in every other respect it was a treat to see and hear someone succeeding so well. With a vocal accuracy sealing richness to brilliance, she projected a musical character of sunny confidence; she also made it clear that words and meanings are as important to her as is the flood of glorious melody. It would be good to see her in a more wide-awake production, since she appeared to have the means to give more than the standard impression of teen-age pride and ardor. However, there was an affecting simpleness here that might be easy to spoil—a simpleness that made it right for Octavian to come to rest alongside Sophie, and especially the rather startled, naïve Sophie of Cheryl Parrish. Ashley Putnam made a sweet Marschallin; anything more was probably out of her grasp, because she needed all her care and caution to control her vibrato, leaving little to inflect words. Eric Halfvarson was a splendid Ochs, every phrase, every gesture smartly tuned, a dog for opportunism and the ability to bounce back. This was, all in all, as good a "Rosenkavalier" as one has the right to expect; the "Fledermaus" was provincial.

"Don Giovanni," a new production, was a bit of a mix. Both Richard Cowan and Kevin Langan, as master and servant, were vocally shadowed and uneventful at the performance I attended. Mr. Cowan was relying too much on a lusting grin and a bare chest to suggest Giovanni; Mr. Langan was perhaps bored by Lou Galterio's unstimulating production. But there were lively performances from Joanne Kolomyjec as Elvira and Ann Panagulias as Zerlina, and a fine, unashamedly big way with Ottavio's arias from Stanford Olsen, who also made the most of his chances as the Italian Tenor in "Der Rosenkavalier." (This casting from the company is one of Santa Fe's enjoyable features; it was good to hear the needle-bright and true Ms. Panagulias taking a small part in "The Sorrows.") Carolyn James as Donna Anna carried herself nobly; Herbert Perry, last seen in this opera as Leporello, for Peter Sellars, was a fit and able Masetto. The production, which had made one wonder only about the need for so many masked dancers, finally answered that question in a spectacular finish, with demons and a death cart whisked out of nowhere to make a quick circuit of the stage on the revolve and then disappear with the Don. This wasn't particularly intelligent about why the opera ends as it does, but it certainly had a kind of brave magnificence.

IF the broad humor of this production smothered the dangers of the piece, the season had its satyr play in Christopher Alden's staging of "The Beggar's Opera." One might have thought that any tough treatment here would trespass on the territory of the Brecht-Weill "Threepenny Opera," and that if "The Beggar's Opera" were to have a continuing existence of its own, that existence could only be as an eighteenth-century period piece. In musical terms, this was indeed how

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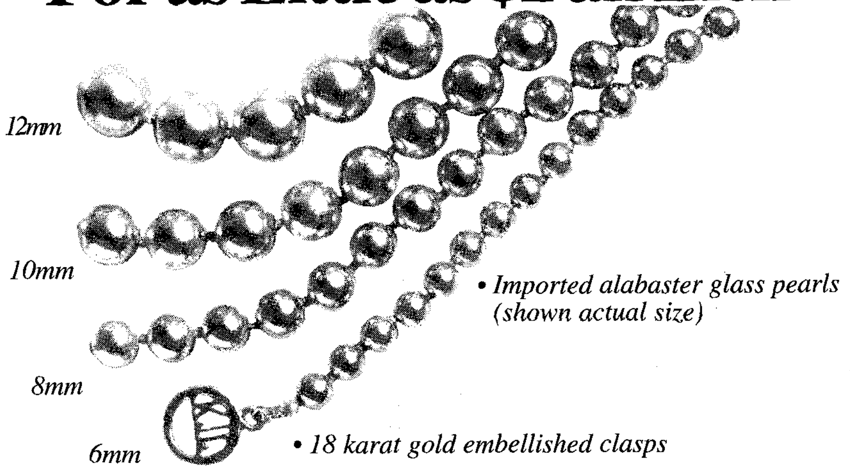

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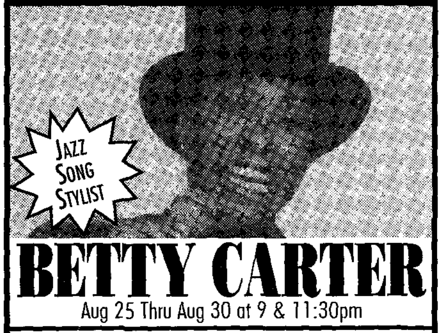

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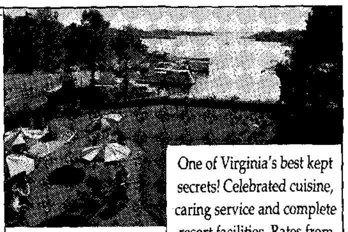

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the Santa Fe effort went. Nicholas McGegan had looked over all the sources in preparing his edition, which he conducted—albeit with modern instruments—in a silver wig. Meanwhile, the stage was showing us a more disturbed and disturbing world.

Even after Brecht, the original John Gay play can clearly pack a punch. It isn't just that the jokes are as relevant now as they were in 1728—the jokes against lawyers, politicians, and wives who wish they were widows—but also that the piece exudes a savage and cynical distaste through every pore. It had its appropriate home here in an underworld. Paul Steinberg set the action in the cusp between two high windowless walls curving away to the right: walls of brick painted in the cream-and-crimson color scheme of strawberry cheesecake but suggesting something less appetizing—a subway station, or a public lavatory. For a dramatis personae consisting wholly of rogues and whores, this was the right place; the setting also had a blank uniformity that made the gathering, gleeful creatures stand out. A further nice point was that it provided the musicians with their own retreat, in a deeper cellar.

Mr. Alden's achievement—and his cast's—was to create a constant bleak, unillusioned hilarity, a black titter. The opportunities for self-disclosing theatre were utilized, with people prompting or applauding each other, and with a lost player in Elizabethan costume (everyone else was in some dark hybrid of eighteenth-century and modern dress) rushing on to deliver stage directions. But what counted for more was the way the singers and actors comported themselves: taking nothing seriously, leaving open the possibility that, almost at any moment, the whole thing could dissolve into mocking laughter. "The Beggar's Opera" was created in part as a satirical antidote to the Italian opera brought to London by Handel and others—a knife to slash at silk costumes. Now it was a knife again.

The world onstage was full enough of undercutting contradictions so that it could accommodate some uncertainty about whether this was an English or an American opera. Several of the cast tried for an English accent; several didn't. The references to London in the play were kept, but in a context where Captain Macheath (James Michael McGuire) looked more like an American hero, a Daniel Boone. Never mind. The open gap between performer and character was just one more fissure in this self-consciously unwholesome evening, one more way in which hopes and beliefs could be let trickle away. And it was certainly better to see this gap operating productively, used deliberately, than to find it appearing unbidden in "Fledermaus," where the singers were caught in a struggle for Viennese style. The difference between Mr. McGuire's performances—unhappy as Dr. Falke, brimming with heroic bravura as Macheath—was indicative.

But then everyone in this "Beggar's Opera" seemed to be having a good time. Timothy Nolen's Peachum had the responsibility for setting the tone of amused contempt: a striking figure in long black coat and flowing gray curls, he relished the opportunity to smile or snarl at anyone's efforts to interpose a moral value, though his good humor, like Mr. McGuire's sound health, gave a sign of some benevolence behind the heartlessness. Janice Hall and Judy Kaye were a nicely complementary pair of girls, pretty and darker of voice. John Kuether was an energetic Filch, running his errands in red wig and yellow plaid suit. Other costumes were on the same level of discretion: Elaine Bonazzi as Mrs. Peachum tottered, with liquor bottle in hand, in black-and-gold trousers before a great gilt bustle; Clarity James was a hugely upholstered Mrs. Trapes.

It was right that we should be no less impressed by how the characters looked than by how they sounded. The music of "The Beggar's Opera" is a medley of popular operatic airs and folk songs, a potpourri conveying a used and musty smell. People survive here by an affront of style. What could give some filling to their spiked and glossy shells—music, music made for them and making them—is not there. To that degree, the piece, especially in a performance as alert as this, is not only a deflation of opera but, by inversion, a demonstration of where its power resides. —PAUL GRIFFITHS

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THE BEST DEALS SINCE
THE PILGRIMS BOUGHT MANHATTAN
—Adv. in the Napa County (Calif.) Record.

That was during the Reagan Administration, wasn't it?

THE THEATRE

Two on the Aisle

REVIVALS of one's favorite plays are always chancy, and revivals of comedies are the chanciest of all, so I must say immediately that the Roundabout's "The Real Inspector Hound" puts all one's fears to rest. Tom Stoppard's comedy, at the Criterion, seems even funnier now than it did twenty years ago, if that is conceivable. The jokes one waits for all pay off, and the forgotten ones are like Christmas morning. The setting is an open stage; we of the theatre audience are facing a stage auditorium, where a pair of critics soon take their seats. They are Moon, a second-stringer, intellectual and learned and eaten with envy, always brooding about the man he is temporarily replacing, and Birdboot, a pompous know-it-all, who tries to quell his lecherous yearnings for the actresses onstage by eating chocolates, all the while spouting the clichés that are indigenous to the critic's trade. The play that Moon and Birdboot are appraising, which shortly begins, is a traditional British thriller. At least, that is what it starts out to be; as time goes by, other kinds of drama emerge. There is a corpse lying on the stage, virtually unnoticed, from beginning to end. A maid enters with the inevitable feather duster in hand; she turns on a radio to hear an announcement that there is a madman on the loose and that he was last seen near Muldoon Manor. She picks up a ringing phone: "Hello, the drawing room of Lady Muldoon's country residence one morning in early spring." (When, some time later, the phone rings again, Moon leaves his seat, walks onto the stage, picks up the phone, and hands it to Birdboot with the words "It's for you," and that's the only sublime moment I'll spoil.) The other characters are the usual complement of the rich and wellborn, including a sinister man in a wheelchair, who is a member of the household, and a young man who answers the description of the madman on the loose.

The play-within-the-play action is funny enough, but it is the conversation of the two critics that is Mr. Stoppard's principal concern—of the learned second-stringer Moon, droning "Kafka, Sartre, Shakespeare, St. Paul, Beckett, Birkett" while his mind is on the succession at his paper, and pompous Birdboot, munching away and boasting about a review of his that was displayed in neon in a theatre lobby while *his* mind is on the ladies of the ensemble.

The first time I reviewed "Inspector Hound," I described it as a satire; this time, I could detect no satiric intent, no passion to improve silly domestic melodramas, or do anything more than puncture the week-in, week-out fatuities of theatre reviewing. This play is more a display of what I once described as "the jolting, punning wit" of Stoppard, the sharpest parodist on the face of the earth. Certainly he's a damn sharp parodist in the theatre today, unequalled on either side of the ocean. The company does well, under Gloria Muzio's direction. Simon Jones, severe and stone-faced as Moon, gives a fine comic performance, and David Healy is just right as fat-cat Birdboot; I also admired J. Smith-Cameron and Jane Summerhays as the onstage objects of Birdboot's lust, Anthony Fusco as the madman, and Rod McLachlan as Inspector Hound. Jeff Weiss is the menacing man in the wheelchair with a surprise up his sleeve, and Patricia Conolly is very funny as every chatty British servant you've ever seen or read about. Gene Silvers, by the way, is properly limp as the corpse, until he jumps to his feet at the curtain call.

"Inspector Hound" is preceded by "The Fifteen Minute Hamlet," which is exactly what it sounds like—a breakneck anthology of gems from—and the actors listed above perform it with the requisite rambunctious skill in thirteen minutes. (There is a two-minute encore.) The settings for both plays, by John Lee Beatty, and lighted by Pat Collins, are admirable, and so are Jess Goldstein's costumes.

—EDITH OLIVER

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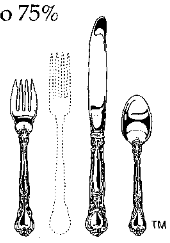

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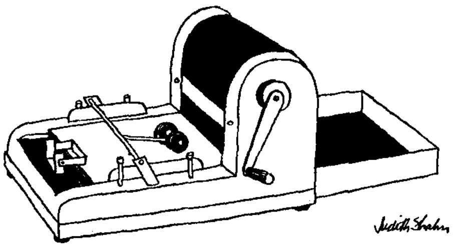
AROUND CITY HALL

Bounce Time

ONE of the rewards bestowed on followers of politics, both national and local, in this uncommon political year has been that of no longer having to sit through solemn discourses on the near-insuperable advantages of incumbency. Of the thirty-four members of the House of Representatives from this state, eight have decided to hang it up, for a variety of reasons, including the prospect of almost certain defeat at the polls. The redistricting required by the demographic results of the 1990 census played a role in some career-change decisions. One casualty of that process, Stephen Solarz (his heavily Jewish Brooklyn district was carved into six parts), is fighting back. He is running in a new district, which includes areas of three boroughs—Brooklyn, Queens, and Manhattan; the areas were selected in a deliberate effort to make possible the election of another Latino congressman from the city. (There is now only one—José Serrano, of the Bronx—although the city's population is about a quarter Hispanic.) In this city where ethnic is everything, the first time Solarz ran for the House, in 1974, he was afraid that voters in his Brooklyn district might think the name Solarz was Hispanic, so he took to handing out his mother's recipe for gefilte fish on street corners. So far, he has not been seen passing around a family recipe for arroz con pollo, but his onetime favorite line—"In my district, getting money for Israel . . . is the functional equivalent of getting money for a dam out West"—is history (appropriations benefitting Puerto Rico are presumably on the *horizonte*), and he has been pointing out that some of his Jewish ancestors came from the Iberian Peninsula.

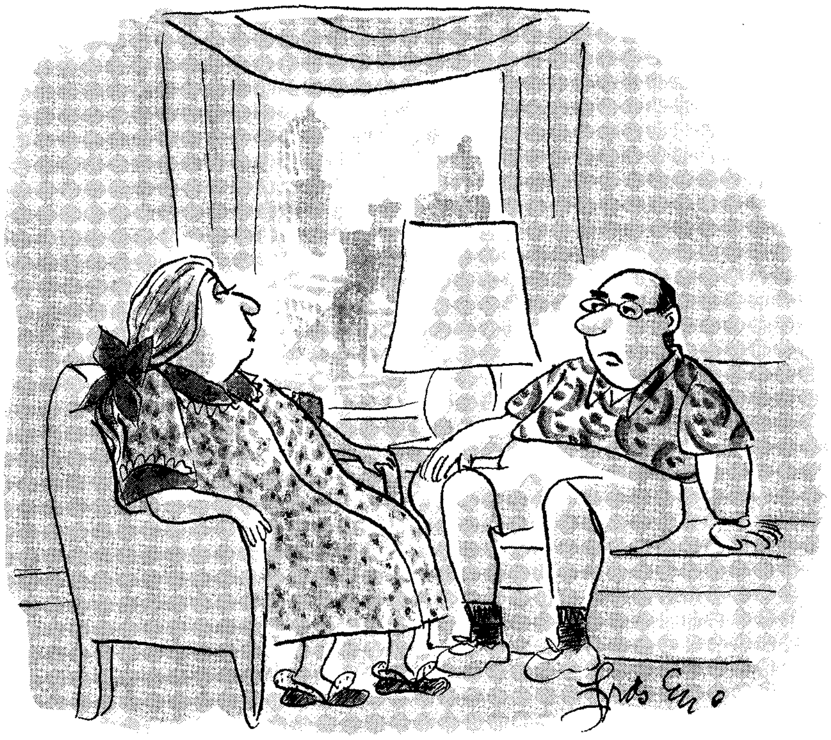
Another well-known local political figure, seventy-four-year-old Mario Biaggi, is asserting the reëlection privilege of *previous* incumbency. In 1988, when he was in his tenth term as a Bronx member of the House, Biaggi was convicted—in an indictment brought by Rudolph Giuliani, then the United States attorney here—on fifteen felony counts, including racketeering, and extorting close to two million dollars' worth of stock in Wedtech, a by then bankrupt machine-tool company in the Bronx, in return for his political influence. He resigned from Congress that summer, after the House Ethics Committee voted unanimously to expel him. He served less than three years of an eight-year sentence in a federal penitentiary, winning early release last year on the ground of extreme ill health. This summer, his health much improved, he has been trying to reclaim the new version of his old district, now a lot more black and Hispanic as the result of redistricting. "My juices are really up for it," he told a reporter last month, during the Democratic National Convention in Madison Square Garden. Inconveniently, the district's current representative, Eliot Engel, is running for reëlection to a third term there and, understandably, is putting his faith in the old incumbency tradition. Biaggi, in asserting his credentials, such as many years on the city's police force, implied that his constituents would benefit from his impressive congressional seniority (although if he should be elected he would be obliged to start up the seniority ladder all over again). He did not mention that he still owes more than half a million dollars in fines levied by the court in the Wedtech case. Nor did he mention a distinction left over from his 1973 race for mayor. As far as is known, he is the only New York mayoral candidate ever to have gone on television and denied that—in an encounter with a police witness—he once bit a man's ear off.

From time to time in the nineteen-seventies, Biaggi announced his probable candidacy for the United States Senate, pointing out that there had never been an Italian-American senator from this state. In 1980, New York elected its first Italian-American senator, Alfonse D'Amato, and two years later—six years after Jimmy Carter, in his Southern Wasp innocence, referred to "the Eyetalians" on the stage at Madison Square Garden, where he had just been nominated for President—Mario Cuomo became the first person of Italian heritage to be elected governor. Despite this state's reputation for being full of pushy females, it has never elected a woman as either governor or senator. D'Amato, a Republican, is now running for a third term, and, of course, his Democratic opponents hope that the old incumbency rule will prove to be out of style in his case. The candidates in the Democratic senatorial primary (in the order of their standing in the latest polls) are the Party's 1984 Vice-Presidential candidate, Geraldine Ferraro; State Attorney General Robert Abrams; City Comptroller Elizabeth Holtzman; and the Reverend Al Sharpton. Ferraro is about fifteen points ahead of Abrams. Abrams and Holtzman have been accused of encouraging recent newspaper stories charging that Ferraro has had mob connections. Cuomo described the stories as "all innuendo," and accused Abrams and Holtzman of resorting to the kind of tactics he would have expected from Republicans. Another popular citation among members of Ferraro's Democratic opposition is the opinion of her expressed by Barbara Bush in 1984, when George Bush and Ferraro were Vice-Presidential candidates on opposing tickets: "I can't say it, but it rhymes with rich." The popularity of the Reverend Al Sharpton (who could also have mob connections, according to some rather ancient evidence offered this month to a congressional committee) has reached only five per cent in the primary polls, despite a pointed reminder from him that no African-American has ever been a major-party nominee for the Senate in this state.



Meanwhile, in the executive area, where redistricting is not a hazard, New Yorkers have been confronted simultaneously by the spectacle of David Dinkins trying to fight off the prospect that the city's first black chief executive, up for reëlection next year, would be a one-term mayor and by the possibility that George Bush would go down in history as a one-term President. If Bush should lose, he would be the first Republican President since Herbert Hoover to leave the White House involuntarily after just four years. When the Republicans met in Houston, Hoover was barely mentioned, but Harry Truman was treated as an icon. Bush, having in mind that Clinton had described himself as "the comeback kid," promised to make "the most stirring comeback since Harry Truman gave them hell in 1948."

When Ronald Reagan, who didn't have any comeback problems, first arrived at the White House, he removed from the East Room the portrait of Truman, hung there by Gerald Ford (who did), and replaced it with one of Calvin Coolidge. It's highly unlikely that a picture of Harry Truman will replace any portraits now on the walls of Dinkins' City Hall office, although the give-'em-hell spirit of '48 could come in handy there, too, in the months ahead. (The pictures now hanging in the Mayor's office are of Paul Robeson and Nelson Mandela. The portrait of Fiorello LaGuardia, which was on the wall during the terms of Dinkins' three mayoral predecessors, is now out in the corridor.) In 1917, Mayor John Purroy Mitchel was defeated for reëlection, and the only other New York mayor to go down after one term was Abraham Beame, who lost in 1977, a casualty of the fiscal crisis. Despite these meagre precedents, Dinkins was being treated this spring as a designated loser: his favorable rating in the polls was twenty-nine per cent. However, a poll published in *Newsday* on July 2nd showed that forty-one per cent of New Yorkers had a favorable opinion of him, an improvement that was assumed by most observers to reflect local relief over the city's having remained relatively quiet after the Rodney King verdict in Los Angeles, which led to so much death and destruction there. Unfortunately, Dinkins' June negative rating—forty-six per cent—was higher than the positive; still, it was an improvement on the downside number three months earlier, which had been fifty-eight per cent. There are now fond hopes in the Mayor's camp that polls taken in the near future will show another upswing in his ratings, as an aftermath of the Democratic Convention, which *Time* (the magazine that a year ago ran a cover story entitled "The Rotting of the Big Apple," which reported that three-fifths of the people who live here would leave town if they could) described as "wildly successful." (Of course, most of the delegates who reported so favorably on the city and its handling of the Convention then left town.) If the Convention gave Bill Clinton's rating a twenty-point "bounce" (one of this year's indispensable political terms, along with "family values," of which the bipartisan flip side is "bimbo"), surely it could provide a modest upward shift in popularity for the needy mayor of the Convention's host city.



"With apologies to Nat King Cole, 'Unforgettable, that's what you are.'"

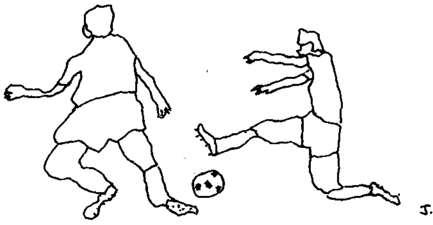
• •

Although bringing the Convention to New York is likely to be singled out as Dinkins' proudest achievement, the most influential figure in the move was undoubtedly the Democratic National Chairman, Ron Brown, who is the first black to serve as chairman of either major party. Brown grew up in Harlem, where his father, the manager of the famous Theresa Hotel, was a friend of Dinkins. (Politics is full of generational contrasts these days; both Clinton and Gore, for example, are younger than Bush's oldest son. Bush-campaign operatives have sent out faxes referring to Clinton as "Boy." So far as is known, no Clinton faxes have gone out calling Bush "Poppy" or, accurately, "Grandpa." Members of the various generations will make use of the differences to their best advantage. Two almost certain candidates in next year's mayoral race—Giuliani, who as the Republican candidate almost beat Dinkins in 1989, and City Council President Andrew Stein, a Democrat who defeated Dinkins twice when he ran for Manhattan borough president—are in their forties. When they take on the Mayor, who will be sixty-six next year, he can be counted on to refer often to his experience and the "So who do you trust?" question.) In a television interview in May, Brown said, "The Convention ought to be in a town which the chairman loves and knows and feels comfortable in and grew up in." On the morning of the third day of the Democratic Convention—it was July 15th, St. Swithin's Day, when, the legend holds, if it rains it will rain for the following forty days—the front page of the *Times* showed the Mayor wearing a broad smile and giving a double thumbs-up sign to the Garden crowd, whom he had welcomed to "the crossroads of the world." The theme of the speech was a message that the Mayor delivers daily, and sometimes more often, at City Hall: that the Reagan-Bush Administrations abandoned the nation's cities, and particularly this one, and that the federal government should resume its old, generous (Democratic) ways—that is, "Send money." Back in the years when Nelson Rockefeller was New York's governor, he had a habit of working the phrase "Brotherhood of Man in the Fatherhood of God" so regularly into speeches that Albany reporters would simply write down "bomfog" and turn their attention elsewhere. At the Dinkins City Hall, when the Mayor brings up the abandonment of cities, often at considerable length, reporters can write down "ban-cit" and take five.

Although Dinkins said nothing new in his speech to the delegates, he delivered it well. According to early reports, he had been allotted seven minutes for what was, after all, just a formality, a welcoming address, but when he complained that seven minutes wasn't enough, someone—perhaps his friend Brown, perhaps Harold Ickes, Clinton's Convention manager, who was counsel to Dinkins' 1989 mayoral campaign and has been serving in the same capacity for his 1993 election effort—intervened. The speech went on for fifteen minutes, only ten minutes less than Governor Mario Cuomo took for his smashing speech nominating Clinton, which caused the nominee to refer to him as "magical Mario." For the Mayor, the Convention was a marvellous week of racing around the city, on occasion by police helicopter, and changing clothes several times a day as he attended one ceremony or festivity after another. Some of the ceremonies were gratifyingly high-level events; for example, he escorted his visiting friend Nelson Mandela—here to address the United Nations—to a formal meeting with Clinton (or, as they kept saying at the Garden, "the next President of the United States"). When reporters calculated that the Mayor had made fifty Convention-related radio or television appearances, his press secretary, Leland Jones, said that in fact the total was sixty-five. The *Times* headline after the last gavel came down was "CONVENTION SPOTLIGHT HAS WARM GLOW FOR THE MAYOR."

A major purpose of having the Convention here was not, of course, to show Dinkins in a warm light but to benefit the city financially. After the delegates left, the Mayor announced that the Convention would, in the end, provide the city with not only twenty-seven million dollars in tax revenues but a hundred and ninety million in direct economic benefits and almost three hundred million more in indirect funds. No one knew whether it would give the big boost to tourism which had been counted on. From some of the jeering references in Houston to what were presented as political atrocities committed at the so-called giant masquerade party here, there seemed to be some danger that the Republicans would succeed in turning "New York Democrats" into the same kind of pejorative that they turned "San Francisco Democrats" into after the Democrats met in that city eight years ago. If they do New York's image too much damage, the city might consider collecting royalties from the Republicans for all the partisan hay they have made over many decades with political ammunition that originated in New York.

IN a speech early this month, Clinton spoke of bracing himself for the Republicans' onslaught against the Democratic ticket. "I can hear them now," he said, his voice rising almost to a wail. "Tax and spend! Tax and spend! Tax and spend!" "Tax and spend" is, everybody knows, shorthand for what the Republicans allege is the established Democratic policy of using the power to tax and then spending the proceeds to gain votes, and it was indeed heard constantly in Houston. The shorthand has been available to Republicans since August, 1938, when Harry Hopkins, Franklin D. Roosevelt's influential adviser, was invited to join a small group in theatrical producer Max Gordon's box at the local Empire City Race Track. Sometime later, Gordon reported to Frank R. Kent, a syndicated columnist, that during the long afternoon of disorganized conversation Hopkins had said of the Roosevelt Administration, "We shall tax and tax, and spend and spend and elect and elect." Hopkins' response was "I never said any such thing. I deny the whole works and the whole implication of it." The other guests in the box that day, who included Heywood Broun, all denied having heard it. Kent, at Gordon's request, declined to reveal his source. Arthur Krock, of the *Times*, who never talked to the source, reported the story as fact. Joseph Alsop and Robert Kintner described it in their syndicated columns as "probably apocryphal." Nevertheless, within days Roosevelt's political enemies were running with it. The Democratic Senate took it seriously enough to hold a formal investigation of the now freighted-with-history afternoon at the racetrack. Gordon, who may have thought that he had been merely making points with a columnist by giving him a quote that would be forgotten in a day, still declined to be identified as the source, and did not appear before the Senate committee. When his role was revealed, some years later, he said that if Hopkins hadn't actually said the often cited words "that's what he meant." Arthur Krock, in his unapologetic testimony before the Senate committee, used the word "logical" in reference to the quote, and explained, "It seemed to me that Mr. Hopkins might have said that." Thus the task of Republican speechwriters has continued to be eased to this day.



That derisive term "limousine liberal," which turned up a number of times in the 1988 Bush-Quayle rhetoric against the Democratic nominee, Michael Dukakis, and which will almost certainly be heard again this year (even though Clinton and Gore's favorite campaign transportation is the more plebeian bus), is also a New York product. It dates back to the 1969 mayoral campaign, when it was used, in a turnaround, by the Democratic candidate, Mario Procaccino, against the Republican incumbent, John Lindsay. One afternoon early in the campaign, some nameless New Yorker, seeing Procaccino come up out of the subway near City Hall with his public-relations man, Martin Steadman, called out approvingly, "Good for you, Mario! You're no limousine liberal!" Steadman, who later served as press secretary to Governor Cuomo, grabbed the phrase and hit Lindsay with it throughout the campaign. In this case, however, the winner was the Republican (and liberal).

A term that was also used in 1969 against Lindsay, also ineffectively, was "the Manhattan arrangement." Lindsay, a Manhattan resident, was charged with being part of a scheme to favor his home base over the four other boroughs. This accusation hasn't lost its appeal. Dinkins, who before he was

elected mayor was the Manhattan borough president, was responding to the complaint that he was too much part of a Manhattan arrangement when, for a seven-day period ending August 2nd, he formally moved the seat of local government to Staten Island, whose residents frequently describe themselves as citizens of "the forgotten borough." The Mayor's sojourn in that rather hostile territory was one of several events that brought him sharply back to reality after the big high of the Convention. It did not rain on St. Swithin's Day. Nevertheless, soon thereafter the weather at City Hall turned decidedly inclement. "In my city, one out of every ten people is without a job," Dinkins had said in his speech to the delegates. Early this month, the Bureau of Labor Statistics showed that the unemployment rate here had risen to 12.1 per cent: now one out of every eight people is without a job. And on August 11th it was announced that the number of people on the city's welfare rolls had gone over the million mark for the first time since 1976: almost one out of every seven residents is on welfare.

Dinkins' shifting of the seat of local government to Staten Island was the fourth time he had made such a gesture in an effort to assure New Yorkers outside Manhattan that he was not indifferent to their concerns. During his week in Brooklyn, last February, two teen-age boys were shot to death in a high school shortly before the Mayor was scheduled to speak there; the weeks in the Bronx and in Queens had been less eventful. Staten Island is the most conservative and the least densely settled of the boroughs. It has three hundred and seventy-nine thousand residents—only a sixth of the number who live in Brooklyn. It has the smallest percentage of blacks of any borough (seven per cent) and the largest percentage of Italian-Americans (nearly fifty). Though it has more registered Democrats than registered Republicans, Dinkins received only eighteen per cent of the votes in 1989, the winner being Giuliani, whose campaign manager was Guy Molinari. Molinari, then a member of the House of Representatives, had run Bush's losing Presidential campaign in the state in 1988. The next year, tired of the Washington shuttle, he had arranged—it was no trouble at all—to have his now thirty-four-year-old daughter, Susan, replace him in the House while he, with the help of a fund-raiser attended by George Bush, got himself elected Staten Island borough president. (The views of Italian-Americans are more diverse than the political experts sometimes lead one to believe. In the matter of abortion, Molinari is strongly right-to-life, while his daughter is just as strongly pro-choice.) Molinari and Dinkins are on poor terms. "We don't care how he did at the Convention. We care what he's doing for Staten Island," the Borough President said of Dinkins' recent venture, suggesting that it was not much.

The Mayor, in his first year in office, urged all New Yorkers to wear blue ribbons as a symbol of their determination to stamp out racial and ethnic intolerance. These were succeeded by yellow ribbons, honoring those serving in the Gulf War. In recent months, Staten Islanders have distributed thousands of red ribbons, marking their intention to secede from the city. A mayoral task force has pointed out that if the Island should secede—a vote on the issue will be taken in November of 1993—real-estate taxes there would have to go up seventy-four per cent or else other major taxes would have to be doubled. "Y'all ain't goin' nowhere," Dinkins told the Islanders during his visit, resorting to a drawl that Democrats, even in this city, may find themselves indulging in frequently if the Arkansas-Tennessee Democratic ticket should be elected. A very sore issue in Staten Island is the presence within its borders of the Fresh Kills landfill, the world's largest garbage dump, where most of the city's garbage ends up. When Dinkins arrived, Susan Molinari presented him with her version of the key to the city: a large placard that featured a picture of a padlock labelled "Molinari Landfill Lock." ("*Staten Island, c'est moi.*") She said that the Mayor shouldn't take it personally. "What's a charitable way to say tacky?" asked Dinkins, who clearly did take it personally.

During his seven days on the Island, he moved in stately fashion from ceremony to reception to tourist attraction. One attraction he did not visit was the Jalopy turtle topiary. In the

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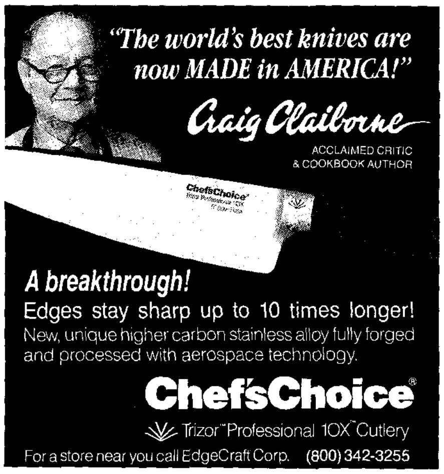

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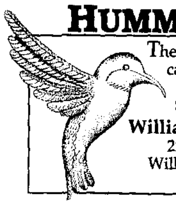

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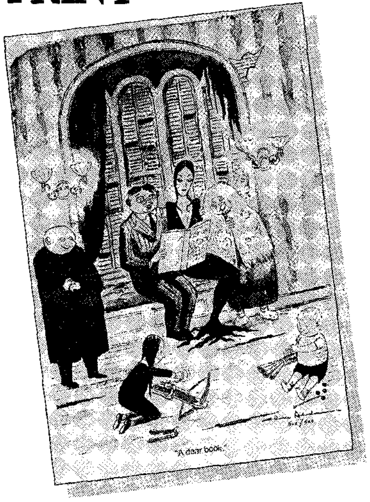

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summer of 1984, arrangements were made by someone well connected with Washington Republicans to have Barbara Bush come to Staten Island and dedicate a topiary—that is, a plant sculpted as a piece of ornamental art. This was in the days when she was available to do the chores of a Vice-President's wife, long before she was a national treasure, as she was called during the Houston Convention, or had been shown in a poll to be more revered than Mother Teresa. The plant she dedicated had been shaped to look like a Galápagos turtle named Jalopy, a popular resident of the Staten Island Zoo who had died a few months earlier. "VICE-PRESIDENT'S WIFE HONORS FALLEN TORTOISE," read the headline in the Staten Island *Advance*. Mrs. Bush praised the turtle's courage in his last illness. "I'm just sorry I never got to know Jalopy," she told several hundred local residents who had gathered for the ceremony. A few weeks later, when she made her celebrated remark about Geraldine Ferraro, it was pointed out that she had been more gracious to the memory of Jalopy than to Ms. Ferraro. Dinkins did visit the world's largest garbage dump. Many Staten Island residents may have been hoping that the notably fastidious Mayor, who was wearing a spotless white windbreaker, could be photographed getting his clothes messed up in their odoriferous landmark, but the Mayor, whom some Staten Islanders regard as a limousine liberal, declined even to get out of his car. "The main reason for me to come here wasn't a photo opportunity," Dinkins announced, as if the whole Staten Island sojourn hadn't been one long photo op.

On August 5th, the Mayor held a press conference to announce a shift that had been rumored for some time: Bill Lynch, his deputy mayor for intergovernmental affairs, would be taking temporary leave to become a deputy in the Clinton-Gore campaign in the state. Lynch, who is one of Dinkins' two black deputy mayors (the other is Fritz Alexander, a former state Court of Appeals judge, whose field is the criminal-justice system), is an amiable and politically very savvy man whose sartorial style—rumpled enough for several—contrasts comically with that of the Mayor. "I consider Bill Lynch to be my brother," the Mayor said at the press conference. "I always like to keep him close by my side so that I might have the full benefit of his sage counsel." Nevertheless, he said, he had to allow Lynch to be away for a while in "the interests of our city and our nation." The Mayor, of course, is counting on a Clinton White House to be more well disposed toward New York than what the city has been used to in the recent past.

A fast listener at the press conference might have got the impression that Lynch would be the dominant figure in the Democrats' campaign in the city, but it later developed that his main assignments would be voter registration and getting out the vote—chores at which he proved to be highly skillful as Dinkins' mayoral campaign manager, helping his candidate win a victory so narrow that getting voters to the polls made all the difference. Clinton's campaign chairman in the state is Mario Cuomo, with Stan Lundine, the lieutenant governor, serving as administrative chairman. The state Democratic chairman, John Marino, whom Lynch will assist in the city, has the title of campaign director. The Clinton campaign will pay Lynch's hundred-and-twelve-thousand-dollar annual salary while he is on leave. In some ways, the arrangement is rather a joke on the Democratic candidate. Lynch would hardly be credited with having pulled off a miracle if Clinton should carry the city: no Republican candidate has carried the five boroughs since Calvin Coolidge, in 1924. As for the state, four years ago Cuomo, as Dukakis's campaign chairman, was able to keep out of Bush's column the nation's second-largest prize in terms of electoral votes. Although Dinkins didn't endorse Clinton until two days before the Convention, the Mayor would have quite a few political friends providentially close to Presidential power if the next man in the White House should be a Democrat. There is Harold Ickes, who is an adviser to the Clinton campaign. There is Ron Brown. And now there is also Bill Lynch, working away at enrolling local voters, who will still be on the rolls next year, when Dinkins runs for reëlection. As a mayoral assistant put it happily to reporters, "we will be using Clinton's money to sign up our voters."

—ANDY LOGAN

A CRITIC AT LARGE

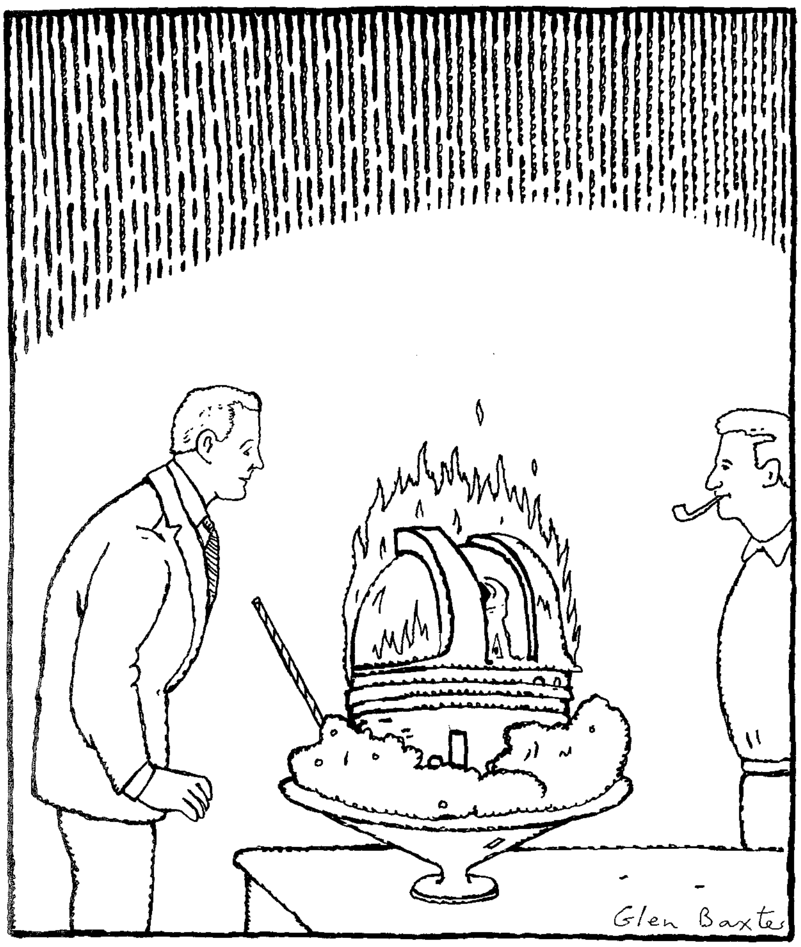
A STUDY IN SCARLETT

IN the summer of 1936, American literature divided resoundingly along its oldest fault line, and the resulting chasm seemed to grow wider and deeper with every sale—roughly a million by the end of December—of a hefty new novel called "Gone with the Wind." On one side of the fissure, patently serious writers and critics conceded that they were hopelessly outnumbered—a fact that the representatives of literature had been bemoaning since at least the middle of the previous century, even before Nathaniel Hawthorne's famous complaint that he was being driven from the literary marketplace by "a damned mob of scribbling women" and a public taste "occupied with their trash." It was one such scribbler and her public who now thronged the opposite side.

The fear of a downwardly spiraling culture associated with a new mass audience had taken on, in literature, the specific taint of the superficial sex. While men who did not understand literary art could be counted on, for the most part, to stick to newspapers, the lettered (if not highly educated) female population had long monopolized sales of fiction, corrupting the novel from its noble roots in Romance—in the greater historical sense, as a worldly or spiritual quest—into romance in the distinctly lesser sense of a courtship tale culminating in marriage. In 1852, Harriet Beecher Stowe produced a novel that was as decried for its domestic bathos as it was celebrated for its moral influence, and that went on to become the biggest best-seller the United States had yet known. (Hawthorne's complaint followed "Uncle Tom's Cabin" by less than three years.) This lengthy precedent could be felt as a kind of pressure slowly building toward the rending contradictions of Margaret Mitchell's Civil War extravaganza: a triple-decker Victorian romance issued nearly twenty years after the Joycean disruptions of modernism; a book by an unknown writer that sold more copies in its first few weeks than many major authors sold in their lifetimes; a story that took root in the national imagination with the rampant force of a myth or a psychosis; America's favorite novel and no part of its literature.

Staggered by the sales figures, distinguished critics were reduced to assailing the patrons of bookstores for being far too eager to reach into their pockets—or, rather, their purses, since, it was recalled, "most book buyers are women"—to pay the unheard-of price of three dollars for what Malcolm Cowley, efficiently summing up both book and audience, characterized as an "entertainment that will carry them through the idle moments for a whole fortnight." One of the striking things about initial critical reactions to Mitchell's work, for and against, was their absolute accord over what it offered—powerful storytelling—and what it lacked: literary style and originality. It was in the value placed on these apparently opposed qualities that ways parted and stands were taken, and the question of whether the term "popular literature" could ever again signify anything more than a bitter oxymoronic joke was widely if sometimes implicitly argued.

Mitchell's book was continually praised for its "readability," as though this were not the first and simplest requirement of any book. For a vast audience, however, the logic of this basic proposition had collapsed into senselessness some years before. And in October, 1936, when William Faulkner published a very different story of the South and the causes and effects of the war, "Absalom, Absalom!," the *Times*, in a review typical of those the book received, credited it with "one of the most complex, unreadable and uncommunicative prose styles ever to find its way into print." Like "The Sound and the Fury" and its other predecessors, Faulkner's new work won only occasional, if intensely felt, praise—for its moral vision, and for what Mitchell's home bastion, the Atlanta *Journal*, recognized as the "first real step forward" in the novel form "since 'Remembrance of



ROBERT WAS ALWAYS ON THE LOOKOUT FOR NEW WAYS TO SERVE SAMBUCA.

Things Past.' " Fourteen years before Faulkner was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, fifteen years short of the work's reissue as a Modern Library classic, "Absalom, Absalom!" sold about seven thousand copies, and then disappeared from the shelves.

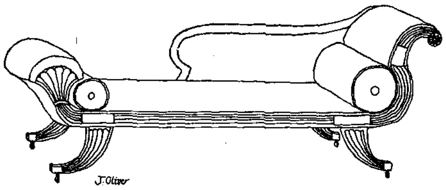
There was the tone of a counter-offensive in those critical celebrations of Mitchell which crowed over the way she "tosses out of the window all the thousands of technical tricks our novelists have been playing with for the past twenty years," and which emphasized the importance of her book as "an alternative to the pessimism, obscurity and fatal complexity of most contemporary novelists." These commendations were offered by Herschel Brickell of the New York *Post* and Edwin Granberry of the New York *Sun*, two of Mitchell's fervent champions, and Granberry concluded, point-blank, "Could it be possible that 'Gone with the Wind' might make it difficult hereafter for the pinched, strangulated novel which pays more attention to manner than matter?"

Even Cowley, one of Mitchell's harshest early critics, found it possible to conclude that, while "Gone with the Wind" was indubitably not a great novel, it did, almost incredibly, make us "weep at a deathbed (and really weep)" and "exult at a sudden rescue," and that it possessed "a simple-minded courage that suggests the great novelists of the past." In fact, among Mitchell's boldest advocates, both "War and Peace" and "Vanity Fair" were frequently evoked in assessments of her novel's historic scope and its contrasting pair of leading ladies. (An Atlanta librarian gave a speech introducing Mitchell in which, in all the wisdom of innocence, she added "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" to this venerable list.) Small wonder, then, that in the excitement of its arrival "Gone with the Wind," seen by some as the last popular straw, was viewed by others as the exemplary way out of an ever-narrowing and more exclusive modernist dictate, a reading ground of reconciliation for a democracy's divided audience.

The book moved into an even larger realm of democratic access when it was sold to the movies, a month after publication, for the record sum of fifty thousand dollars. Although the film, produced by David O. Selznick, was the subject of intense national curiosity throughout the three years it was being made, Mitchell refused to have anything to do with it, apart from recommending Georgia friends to serve as consultants on matters of authenticity in custom, dress, and even Southern horticulture. (They kept dogwoods from blooming during cotton-picking time, and the cotton itself from springing up along a plantation's front lawn.) Mitchell never set foot in Hollywood.

Arriving there, however, at the time of the big sale was William Faulkner, forced to hire himself out as a screenwriter—not for the first time—after the commercial failure of all his recent work. A letter written that September suggests his reaction to the "Gone with the Wind" phenomenon: shifting among film assignments like "Slave Ship" and "Splinter Fleet," he announced to his agent that he was determined to sell "Absalom, Absalom!" to the studios himself, and, furthermore, he said, "I am going to ask one hundred thousand dollars for it or nothing." Nothing is what he got. Faulkner made it clear that he had not read Mitchell's book ("No story takes a thousand pages to tell" was his full pronouncement), and his only other reflection on its significance may be inferred from a letter written in the summer of 1936, from Mississippi, in which, updating Hawthorne, he lamented his lost habit of "writing trash" and added, "I seem to be so out of touch with the Kotex Age here."

By late 1939, when Selznick's "Gone with the Wind" was nearing release, a Gallup poll found that an estimated fifty-six million five hundred thousand people were planning to see it. Fulfilling all expectations, the overwhelming adoration accorded the movie and its stars certainly reinforced the popularity of Mitchell's book, and has very possibly preserved it. In the public mind, the two versions have merged to the point where it is difficult to say anymore whether "Gone with the Wind" is in essence a novel or a movie, and, in fact, the distinction may not mean much: Mitchell's characters long ago burst through the restraints of their form and, like folk- or fairy-tale figures, passed directly into the *mainstream consciousness.*



The much remarked "readability" of the book must have played a part in this smooth passage from the page to the screen, since "readability" has to do not only with freedom from obscurity but, paradoxically, with freedom from the actual sensation of reading—of the tug and traction of words as they move thoughts into place in the mind. Requiring, in fact, the least reading, and making the least investment in an embodying language, the most "readable" book allows its characters to slip most easily through nets of words and into other forms. Popular art has been well defined by just this effortless movement from medium to medium, which is carried out, as Leslie Fiedler observed in relation to "Uncle Tom's Cabin," "without loss of intensity or alteration of meaning." Isabel Archer rises from the page only in the hanging garments of Henry James's prose, but Scarlett O'Hara is a free woman.

When, in 1913, Henry James saw one of the innumerable stage productions of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" that had sustained the book's fame and its message over the decades, he recognized this "leaping" quality of popular art. "Uncle Tom," he wrote, "instead of making even one of the cheap short cuts through the medium *in which* books breathe, even as fishes in water, went gaily roundabout it altogether, as if a fish, a wonderful 'leaping' fish, had *simply flown through the air.*" Having accomplished this feat, "the surprising creature could naturally fly anywhere, and one of the first things it did was thus to flutter down on every stage, literally without exception, in America and Europe." Margaret Mitchell labored over a book, not a screenplay; she doubted for a time whether "Gone with the Wind" could be filmed at all. ("I don't see how it could possibly be made into a movie," she wrote to her publisher, who had intimated otherwise, "unless the entire book was scrapped and Shirley Temple cast as 'Bonnie,' Mae West as 'Belle,' and Stepin Fetchit as 'Uncle Peter.' ") What her work reflects to perfection is the state of affairs in the republic of letters during a period when all popular art aspired to the condition of the movies.

YET the ancestry of "Gone with the Wind" extends back far beyond Hollywood. In a proud geneal-

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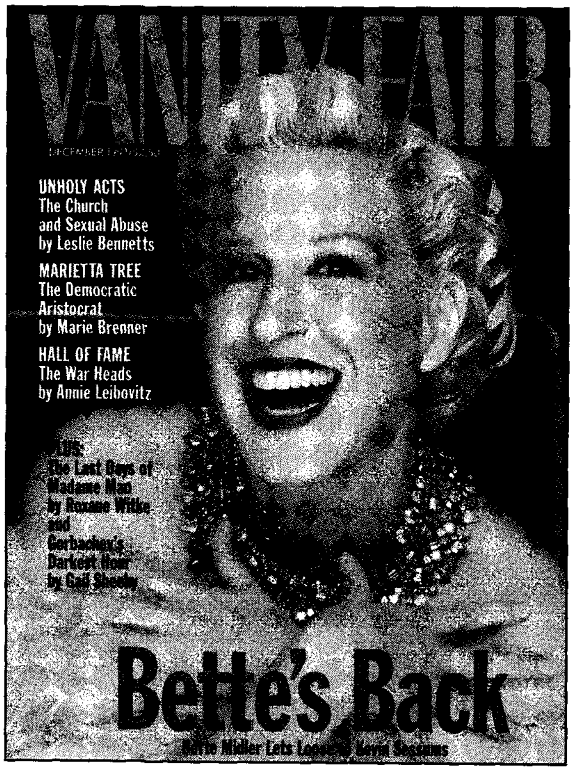
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ogy sketched out for her publisher, Margaret Mitchell noted that some of her forebears had sailed to America "with the Hector MacDonald colony after the failure of the Stuart uprising," a family legend that constitutes only the most literal element in the author's heritage from Walter Scott. The valiant Scottish clans of the Waverley Novels, aligned against the English in the cause of the exiled Stuart kings, became a near-worldwide sensation in the early nineteenth century, and Scott's romantic nationalism stirred a deep chord of response from France to Italy to Russia—which is to say, from Balzac to Manzoni to Pushkin. In the raw new American literature, Sir Walter's twilight-of-a-nobility theme was reworked in books like James Fenimore Cooper's "The Last of the Mohicans," in which the tragic aristocrat of the Highlands was resettled among the tribes of the New World's frontier. Cooper begins with an epigraph from "Richard II": "Say, is my kingdom lost?" But, for all their renown, the works of Walter Scott, and the gospel truths to be found therein, were cherished nowhere else so long or so well as in the American South.

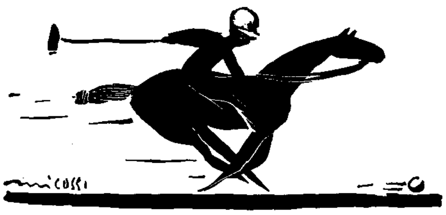
With Scott's "Ivanhoe," issued among the Waverleys for a variation in setting, if not in theme, an idyll of sentimental feudalism was taken up in the antebellum South as a blueprint and a benediction for a civilization already divided into landed fiefdoms and fully regulated by caste. Out of the novel's high-colored Arthurian cloth was fashioned, in and for the states of the future Confederacy, a self-conscious and elaborately archaizing cult of courtliness (the leading planters even dubbing themselves "The Chivalry"), complete with tournaments and duels and, above all, a prodigiously exaggerated attachment to the chastity and honor of women, who were reared and cultivated accordingly. The adoption of this fantastic, mass-scale impersonation—and had there been no Scott, his defenders have pointed out, Malory would have done as well—served to transform the surface appearance of a brutal and retarded economic system into a fancy-dress theatrical. It also provided a much needed cultural ambience—based, of necessity, on the fullest amplification of social ceremony—in a region that, as visitors both European and Yankee noted, was conspicuously lacking in other signs of contemporary enlightenment, from orchestras and opera houses to publishing firms and libraries and debating societies, and in which censorship had severed access to all intellectual engagement with the larger issues of the political order.

By the time Mark Twain had steamed down the Mississippi as far as the neo-Gothic, turreted statehouse of Baton Rouge and the Mardi Gras in New Orleans, he felt able to pinpoint the source of all the errors and woes of the deluded and darkened—indeed, the anti-Enlightenment—South:

> Then comes Sir Walter Scott with his enchantments, and by his single might checks this wave of progress, and even turns it back; sets the world in love with dreams and phantoms . . . with the sillinesses and emptinesses, sham grandeurs, sham gauds, and sham chivalries of a brainless and worthless long-vanished society. He did measureless harm; more real and lasting harm, perhaps, than any other individual that ever wrote. . . . It was Sir Walter that made every gentleman in the South a Major or a Colonel, or a General or a Judge, before the war; and it was he, also, that made these gentlemen value these bogus decorations. . . . Sir Walter had so large a hand in making Southern character, as it existed before the war, that he is in great measure responsible for the war.

It is plainly no accident that Huck and Jim are nearly done in by a gang of murderers aboard a wrecked steamboat called the Walter Scott.

"Say, is my kingdom lost?" would be an appropriate epigraph for "Gone with the Wind," too, as it would for the half century of "plantation novels" that preceded it. The type emerged full-bodied and heavy-scented in the eighteen-eighties, drenched in nostalgia for the way of life the war had taken, although, as the historian William R. Taylor pointed out more than two decades after the apotheosis of "Gone with the Wind," the nostalgia actually predated the war. Before the "antebellum" was ante anything, it was merely an aftermath, from which Southerners who were so inclined yearned for the brighter paradise before the Revolution. Southern novelists from the eighteen-thirties on harked back to the ancien régime of Colonial Virginia with stricken delight, as in John Esten Cooke's "The Virginia Comedians," of 1854, quoted in Edmund Wilson's "Patriotic Gore": "Where are they now, those stalwart cavaliers and lovely dames who filled that former time with so much light, and merriment, and joyous laughter? . . . What do we care if the laces are moth-eaten—the cocked hats hung up in the halls of Lethe—the silk stockings laid away in the drawer of oblivion?" Of course, yearning for a lost golden age may be less a response to a real historical place and circumstance than a chronic human inclination, and perhaps a precondition of the literary impulse; even Homer had to look back centuries to find heroes worthy of his praise.



In the eighteen-eighties, the South's premier plantation novelist, Thomas Nelson Page, invented or codified every cliché of worthy master and loyal slave, and his works were popular not only in his home region but in the repentant and conciliatory North. After the war, it became as safe for Northerners to vent a retrospective sigh for the age of Massa and Mammy as it had been for Walter Scott to exalt the ancient glamour of the Stuarts from a position securely founded on Whiggish prosperity.

Its image enhanced by the ineffable charm of loss—of having lost, of being lost—the South assumed its role in the romance of America as the festooned and feminine counterpart of the relentlessly masculine West. So appealing did this image of languid Southern gentility come to seem in an age of unstoppable industrial momentum that even W. E. B. Du Bois could write with lyrical regret of the passing of "the old ideal of the Southern gentleman,—that new-world heir of the grace and courtliness of patrician, knight, and noble." In his eulogizing essay "Of the Wings of Atalanta," collected in "The Souls of Black Folk," in 1903, Du Bois lamented the South's accession to a greedy new mercantile culture, and compared his adopted Atlanta, symbol of all that the South might be, to the legendary Greek girl ("If Atlanta be not named for Atalanta, she ought to have been") who outraced all men but lost her freedom when tricked by gold.

Margaret Mitchell, an Atlantan of six generations' standing, claimed as one of her novel's first aims the creation of a heroine who would embody the vital contradictions of the South's most ambitious city—a city "crude with the crudities of youth and as headstrong and impetuous as herself." The fact that she even attempted this was a part of her larger claim to have broken with the old plantation tradition. Northern critics like Cowley might see her book as "an encyclopedia of the plantation legend," and Louis Kronenberger, writing in this magazine, could imagine Mitchell waking in the night to groan "I left out a lynching! I left out a fox hunt!"; but Southerners like Stephen Vincent Benét registered the book's differences from its predecessors and praised its author's "more realistic treatment."

Mitchell believed in the daring of her realism. On the verge of the book's publication, her husband instructed the Macmillan Company to prepare for "a 'public relations' problem" that "Gone with the Wind" might arouse "in these parts"—quite reasonably, in his view, since "it deals with the South with considerable frankness." What he evidently had in mind was the fact that Mitchell's up-country Georgians are not old landed gentry but a socially mixed and rambunctious lot, many of them so newly settled that even an Irish immigrant—Gerald O'Hara, who had won his plantation, Tara, in a card game—could gain a place among them. Mitchell's horse-breeding and slave-owning Tarletons have "less grammar than most of their poor Cracker neighbors"; the book's first use of the word "aristocrat" refers to their dog. The patrician Wilkes family, of nearby Twelve Oaks—that "beautiful white-columned house that crowned the hill like a Greek temple," without which a Southern tale would have been like a mystery without a crime—are thought by their upstart neighbors to be "born queer," partly because of inbreeding but mostly, as Ma Tarleton tells her boys, "because their grandfather came from Virginia."

The historian Henry Steele Commager observed, in an early and highly favorable review, that "Gone with the Wind" was indeed about the opposition of two civilizations, but that these were not the North and the South but the Old South and the New. The momentous giving way of one era to the next is traced by Mitchell over a span of twelve years, from the eve of the Civil War to the middle of Reconstruction, but the discord and instability of the time are dramatized, above all, in the person of a girl, introduced on page 1 at the age of sixteen, whose very face betrays the contrast, too sharp, of "the delicate features of her mother, a Coast aristocrat of French descent, and the heavy ones of her florid Irish father"—a fast and greedy young Atalanta named Scarlett O'Hara.

Margaret Mitchell professed annoyance when asked, as she often was—and at least once for good money, by *Vogue*—to discuss the character of Scarlett O'Hara in terms of her "modernity." "Good God," she remarked in a letter that first hectic September—while rejecting all such public offers—"do they think hardheaded women only came to life in the 1930s? Why don't they read the Old Testament?" But the character was confounding even to the author. Shortly before publication, Mitchell had requested that the name of Scarlett's kindhearted foil, Melanie, not be removed from the advertising copy—she is still there, described on the current dust jacket as "a loyal friend and true gentlewoman"—because, Mitchell avowed, "after all, she's the heroine of the book." (Thackeray had affixed the same label to the "gentle and uncomplaining little martyr" Amelia Sedley midway through "Vanity Fair," in pointed distinction from another such green-eyed baggage as Mitchell's Scarlett.)

Scarlett O'Hara was enough of a public obsession and enough of a credible personality to be psychoanalyzed in learned journals, and to a psychiatrist who concluded that America's new princess was a "partial psychopath" and a person of "inward hollowness" Mitchell responded with excited approval; at last, someone had got her point. "I set out to depict a far-from-admirable woman," she wrote, in one of the long letters that consumed her time in the book's aftermath, and which have been collected and edited by Richard Harwell. "I have found it wryly amusing when Miss O'Hara became somewhat of a national heroine and I have thought it looked bad for the moral and mental attitude of a nation." True, Mitchell could also, on occasion, defend her character's finer qualities of courage and perseverance and appetite for life. One popular diagnosis of just why "Gone with the Wind" had conquered America—it appeared in the *Reader's Digest*, in 1939—found that the story's primary appeal lay in Scarlett O'Hara's position as "the master of her world rather than its victim," her exemplification of "personal triumph over social insecurity." It may indicate something about changing times that in 1957 a survey of a class of American high-school girls, noted by Helen Taylor in the book "Scarlett's Women," found that all but one of the girls identified with docile Melanie, or claimed to; and that in a similar survey of 1970, also mentioned by Taylor, three-quarters of the girls firmly aligned themselves with Scarlett.

Of course, no one needed to ask whether young American males identified with the book's fair Ashley Wilkes or dark Rhett Butler, for it was reasonably certain that few had read it. Despite its wartime setting, "Gone with the Wind" is in no respect a "boy's book": the gallant soldiers leap onto their horses and ride off to battle as if over the edge of the earth, and they return or they don't; the reader's place is emphatically with those who stay behind. All is seen from a woman's point of view—or, rather, from a girl's. The tempting young men are nearly overmatched by the tempting dresses, the "rose organdie with long pink sash," or the "green plaid taffeta, frothing with flounces and each flounce edged in green velvet ribbon," or the "butter-yellow watered silks with garlands of rosebuds." In the long period during which Mitchell's audience of American "girls" could retain their status until late middle age, and then on through the years of tension between growing freedom and obdurate complicity, Scarlett O'Hara has remained a congenial paragon of contradiction: a prodigy of femininity in full rebellion, an expert in the disdained tactics of sex, a "master of her world" who is never less than wildly desirable—capability and authority with a seventeen-inch waist.

Mitchell's favorite word for Scarlett is "unanalytical," but from the start the girl is aware that even the most cultivated bloom of ingenuous charm cannot make her into the lady she aspires to be. Unlike Becky Sharp, Scarlett is troubled by her failure of gentility, and troubled, too, by her ability to see through the mechanisms necessary to deliver her to her fate: "Don't you suppose men get surprised after they're married to find that their wives do have sense?" Moreover, the Southern belle was bred to conform to a subspecies of the nineteenth-century "lady" such as exceeded all other regional varieties in its veneration of a high artificiality, in its observance of the prescribed distance between ideal and flesh. "At no time, before or since, had so low a premium been placed on feminine naturalness," Mitchell writes, and in this historical judgment, at least, she has been confirmed. For Scarlett, the ideal is embodied in her adored mother, the saintly Ellen, whose back is never seen to rest against the back of any chair on which she sits, whose broken spirit is everywhere mistaken for righteous calm, and in whose chaste perceptions—despite her three daughters and three buried sons—"mares never foaled nor cows calved," and even "hens almost didn't lay eggs." Scarlett hopes that someday she will manage to be like her mother, only—rather like St. Augustine—not yet.

But why should so extreme an attitude toward women—"gyneolatry," as one historian has termed it—have prevailed in the American South? Is it to be understood simply as a fevered symptom of the Walter Scott disease? Or was it a deeper response—not to the neo-chivalric delusion but to the society's need to be deluded? Margaret Mitchell troubled her head with "why" no more than Scarlett does. But then this is a question to which Mitchell could not possibly attend, since the answer, like so many answers in the South, is tied to the facts of slavery and race, facts that the author cannot abide and that she spent considerable energy in dissembling.

The only antebellum chains glimpsed in "Gone with the Wind" are metaphorically attached to the hardworking ladies of the manor houses—"chained to supervision of cooking, nursing, sewing and laundering." It has become a commonplace observation that Harriet Beecher Stowe approached the unfamiliar oppression of slavery through an intimate knowledge of the oppression of her sex. Charlotte Brontë's comment that "Mrs. Stowe had felt the iron of slavery enter into her heart from childhood upwards" is roughly contemporary with the remark of Mary Chestnut—no friend to Mrs. Stowe—that "there is no slave, after all, like a wife." It was through this kind of identification with enslavement that many middle-class white women came to the forefront of the abolitionist movement, and they went on to establish the cause of their own suffrage with a sense of natural progress and undeniable justice. The slave narrative of Harriet Jacobs approaches its conclusion with the perfect reversal of the Brontë romantic formula: "Reader, my story ends with freedom; not in the usual way, with marriage."

In the South, the connection between women and slaves, no less strong, came to be expressed not as an alliance but—particularly after the rise of abolitionism—as a necessary opposition. Slavery was represented, by its supporters, as a specific boon to women. An 1832 study, which included an account of the last great debates on slavery held in the Virginia legislature, argued that the institution served gloriously to lift "woman" to a new and fitting station: "We behold the marked effects of slavery on the conditions of woman—we find her at once elevated, clothed with all her charms, mingling with and directing the society to which she belongs, no longer the slave but the equal and the idol of man."

There is a more insidious element in this elevation of a new idol than can be explained by the transfer of labor from wife to slave, and it is an element that Margaret Mitchell delicately but quite certainly meant to address, or, rather, to dismiss, by her repeated epithets for the admirable slaves of Tara. Both Mammy, "shining black, pure African," and Pork, "shining black, dignified," are pointedly of unmixed blood (only Dilcey is said to be part Indian)—a characteristic that distinguishes them from the substantial number of mulattoes, who by the 1860 census accounted for a minimum of twelve per cent of the non-white Southern rural population. In the contemporary words, again, of Mary Chestnut, who was a frequent resident of her father-in-law's South Carolina plantation and a friend of the Jefferson Davises: "We live surrounded by prostitutes. . . . Our men live all in one house with their wives and their concubines, and the mulattoes one sees in every family exactly resemble the white children—and every lady tells you who is the father of all the mulatto children in everybody's household, but those in her own she seems to think drop from the clouds, or pretends so to think." And, elsewhere, "Mrs. Stowe did not hit the sorest spot. She makes Legree a bachelor."

Looking at passages from Chestnut's diary and similar accounts, Edmund Wilson felt forced to conclude, as W. J. Cash had done two decades before him, that "the pedestalled purity which the Southerners assigned to their ladies, the shrinking of these ladies themselves from any suggestion of freedom, were partly a 'polarization' produced by the uninhibited ease with which their men could go to bed with the black girls." To set oneself off from the status of mere "chief slave of the harem," in the words of a planter's wife recorded by Harriet Martineau, in 1837, one would have to set oneself off from the flesh itself. To be above reproach was also, perhaps, to be above feeling reproach; to think no evil was to see none. Her moral virginity intact, her sanction granted, the Southern woman's status—"the South's Palladium," Cash called her—was her reward. There was far more to Ellen O'Hara's immaculate cows and hens than Margaret Mitchell would ever be willing to admit.

MITCHELL'S mother, Maybelle Mitchell, was a lady, and something more: around the time of her daughter's birth, in 1900, she became one of Atlanta's leading suffragists. This cause would seem to contradict the antebellum sentiment with which the family also lived (Margaret's older brother was named for the Vice-President of the Confederacy, Alexander Stephens), the natural residue of a culture still bitter over defeat and essentially unresigned; in those years, Atlanta displayed one United States flag, of necessity—at the post office. The twin dedications of the household were reconciled, apparently, in the conviction that women's strength was a foundation of the Old South. (Living proof was ever at hand in the dauntless person of Maybelle's own mother, Annie Fitzgerald Stephens, whose legendary trials and triumphs throughout the war were to serve as a model for those of Scarlett O'Hara.) And so the little girl who grew up singing "I'm a Good Old Rebel" as a parlor trick was also carted off to suffrage rallies with a "Votes for Women" banner tied around her belly.

Maybelle Mitchell had forfeited hopes for a career in science or medicine when she married, and she was driven by the desire that her daughter should have an education. Margaret Mitchell later recounted payment schemes by which her mother coerced her into "classical" reading: "Mother used to give me a nickel for each of Shakespear's plays . . . a dime for Dickens, fifteen cents for Nietzsche and Kant and Darwin." It had not been an easy way to augment her allowance: "Even when she raised the ante to twenty-five cents with a licking thrown in, I couldn't read Tolstoy, or Hardy or Thackeray either, for that matter." By the time she repeated this story, in letters to appreciative fans and reviewers, Mitchell was easing into her role of Good Ol' Girl of the best-seller lists, explaining why her Scarlett could not have been indebted to Becky Sharp: she hadn't read "Vanity Fair" until 1935. (This was, perhaps coincidentally, the year of the R.K.O. Technicolor "Becky Sharp," starring Miriam Hopkins, whom Mitchell privately touted for the role of Scarlett.)

Another of Maybelle's attempts to impress her principles on her daughter's mind resulted in an experience that Margaret Mitchell called "the genesis of my book"—her first unforgettable lesson in what she saw as the great theme of survival. Aged six, Margaret had returned from the new experience of school angry and discouraged, refusing to return. "And Mother took me out on the hottest September day I ever saw," she recounted in 1936, "and drove me down the road toward Jonesboro . . . and showed me the old ruins of houses where fine and wealthy people had once lived. . . . And she talked about the world those people had lived in, such a secure world, and how it had exploded beneath them. And she told me that my own world was going to explode under me, some day. . . . She said that all that would be left after a world ended would be what you could do with your hands and what you had in your head."

The Jonesboro road that mother and daughter took that day became, Mitchell attests, "the road to Tara," along which Scarlett O'Hara would flee from burning Atlanta in her rickety wagon, through the charred and empty countryside. "If she could only reach the kind arms of Tara and Ellen," Mitchell wrote, "and lay down her burdens, far too heavy for her young shoulders—the dying woman, the fading baby, her own hungry little boy, the frightened negro, all looking to her for strength, for guidance, all reading in her straight back courage she did not possess and strength which had long since failed." Scarlett arrives home, the house still standing but emptied of comfort or rest, on the day after her mother's death.

Margaret Mitchell said that she wrote this part of the book, and only this part, in one long streak: twenty-four pages without revision. Critics generally found it to be the best of her work. This is a matter not of finer sentences or more elegant phrases—Mitchell's effects are not to be found in such separable elements—but of the broad, building rhythms sustained over the journey, the discovery, and the final resolution. Her world overthrown, Scarlett takes up the new matter of hunger, her own and her family's, and when weariness and illness overcome her she makes her famous vow: "I'm going to live through this, and when it's over, I'm never going to be hungry again. No, nor any of my folks. If I have to steal or kill—as God is my witness, I'm never going to be hungry again." And yet, for all that Maybelle Mitchell's lesson struck deep, her real point was lost in the mounting violins and the lurid sky, even in the book. Her final plea, after all—the reason for the ride into the ruined past—was, as always, the importance of education. "So for God's sake, go to school and learn something that will stay with you" is what her daughter remembered her saying when their journey was over.

In fact, Margaret Mitchell not only resisted her mother's attempts to give her a literary education but mutinied completely around the age of twelve, tumbling free at last into pulp and adventure. Movie-crazed, she grew into a determined madcap, a four-foot-ten-inch "baby-faced li'l vamp"—an overheard description that delighted her—honing her skills on the soldiers of a nearby military camp. In the fall of 1918, she went off to Smith College, where she received mediocre grades and an enviable quantity of mail from servicemen overseas. In what seems now the outstanding incident of her college career, Mitchell quit a history course, in anger, because a black student was also enrolled; in defiance of college rules, she managed to obtain a transfer to another class. A more apt metaphor for Margaret Mitchell's relationship to the subject of African-Americans in history could hardly have been invented.

In the middle of her freshman year, Mitchell was summoned back to Atlanta by news that her mother was ill. Maybelle Mitchell died of the flu in January,

Another Breakthrough from A. T. & T.

1919, on the day before her daughter reached home. Foreseeing the consequences of her death, she left Margaret a letter that fairly glows with maternal light, counselling her against the temptation to surrender her future in order to become her father's caretaker: "Give of yourself with both hands and overflowing heart, but give only the excess after you have lived your own life." Margaret returned to Smith to finish out the year, and then came home for good, to do exactly what her mother had warned her against. In later years, she made grandiose claims for the career she had sacrificed—"I started out to be a psychiatrist, but, unfortunately, was forced to leave college when my mother died"—but it seems clear that what she experienced at the time was a sense of relief.

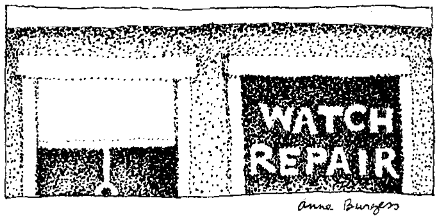
Back in Atlanta, Mitchell became the classic jazz baby—by her own description, "one of those short-haired, short-skirted, hard-boiled young women who preachers said would go to hell or be hanged before they were thirty." She scandalized the Junior League by performing, at a charity ball, an Apache dance—complete with clinch—adapted from a Valentino movie. The men from nearby Camp Gordon met each other coming and going on her Peachtree Street veranda, and at one point she was engaged to five of them. "You can say all you please about my being an unscrupulous flirt," she wrote to a college friend in the North, "but I'm here to state that I haven't lied to those five men—nor have I misled them in any way."

In 1922, she made a disastrous marriage, to a handsome bootlegger who had been forced to resign—twice—from Annapolis. The marriage was undone in a matter of months. She got a job writing features for the Sunday magazine of the Atlanta *Journal*—reporter jobs were not open to women—and she sent off a group of stories to H. L. Mencken's *Smart Set;* all were rejected. (Mencken had recently published his notorious essay on the South, "The Sahara of the Bozart," in which he identified even the once reigning state of Virginia as "an intellectual Gobi or Lapland," and characterized the whole region as "a vast plain of mediocrity, stupidity, lethargy, almost of dead silence.")

In July of 1925, Mitchell was married again—to John Marsh, a suitor who had lost out the first time and had stayed on to serve as best man at her previous wedding. Marsh was as mild and as conventional as her first husband had been wild. Having asked her father's consent and set the date, he became seriously ill and had to be hospitalized with severe hiccups, an ailment that persisted for forty-two days. Mitchell continued at her newspaper job for nearly a year after the marriage, until Marsh received a raise from the utilities company where he worked, and, bowing to his wishes, she agreed to stay home. But it was while she was still at the *Journal* that she began, with Marsh's encouragement, to work on what he would later refer to as a "jazz age novel." Marsh had given her a copy of "The Great Gatsby," newly published, for their first Christmas together. She was already an admirer of Fitzgerald's work, and she described him years later—in 1939—as a kind of hero, even as Fitzgerald himself was toiling away in Hollywood, helping to pare her dialogue into a screenplay.

The best bits of "Gone with the Wind" do indeed reflect this literary taste and this initial ambition. They have a lightness and a barely transplanted "jazz age" fizziness that manage to lift the text briefly on little gusts of social comedy: the Tarleton twins' scheming to fall in love with the same girl so as to keep each other company; the crossed signals of Charles Hamilton's warm proposal of love and Scarlett's frosty response; some of the descriptions of Southern customs ("Frequently elderly aunts and uncles came to Sunday dinner and remained until they were buried years later"). The princely Ashley Wilkes speaks as though his mind were in a truss, but to Scarlett he is ever, quite simply, "the tall drowsy boy she loved."

Phrases that ring clear have most often to do with Scarlett's character—determined and gay, childlike and utterly selfish—as she finds herself, confused and resentful, in acts of necessary kindness: yielding her bonnet to shield Melanie from the beating sun on the road to Tara, her only thought is the endearingly grumpy "I'll be as freckled as a guinea egg before this day is over." And, in what must be the sweetest line in the book, Scarlett ministers, unhappily, to the broken young Confederate soldiers as they retreat through Atlanta: "Why should she be standing here in Aunt Pitty's peaceful front yard, amid wavering lights, pouring water over dying beaux?" Those critics and readers who vexed Mitchell by insisting on her heroine's "modernity"—who recognized in Scarlett O'Hara traces of the "jazz age" girl—may have been on to something of her origins.



SUCH qualities of gaiety or sweetness as "Gone with the Wind" possesses are confined largely to the book's earlier sections, before the onset of Reconstruction or the felt consequences of Emancipation. ("It's just ruined the darkies," says Scarlett, innocent of irony, if of little else.) But even from the start these patches of light are heavily overshadowed, and are finally blotted out entirely, by the inescapable grimness of Mitchell's racial politics.

Approximately three-quarters of the way through the novel, Scarlett O'Hara is assaulted while riding alone in her carriage. The war is over. Her first husband, the calflike Charles Hamilton, whom she married for spite, left her a widow. Her second husband, the meek Frank Kennedy, whom she married for money, has been unable to prevent her, despite the breach of propriety and the danger, from pursuing her business interests in outlying parts of Atlanta. It is almost dark, and she is on the road bordering the new postwar Shantytown, when she is set upon by "a big ragged white man and a squat black negro with shoulders and chest like a gorilla." She refuses to give them money; the white man shouts that it must be hidden "in her bosom." Her gun is wrenched from her hand, and then: "The negro was beside her, so close that she could smell the rank odor of him as he tried to drag her over the buggy side. With her one free hand she fought madly, clawing at his face, and then she felt his big hand at her throat and, with a ripping noise, her basque was torn open from neck to waist. Then the black hand fumbled between her breasts, and terror and revulsion such as she had never known came over her and she screamed like an insane woman."

Scarlett is saved at the last moment by the appearance of Big Sam, the onetime slave foreman of Tara. He beats both men off—perhaps kills them. ("Ah hope Ah done kill dat black baboon. But Ah din' wait ter fine out," he tells her afterward. "But ef he hahmed you, Miss Scarlett, Ah'll go back an' mek sho of it.") Sam drives her home and is thanked for his loyalty. And that night Scarlett becomes a widow again, when her husband is killed during a retaliatory raid on Shantytown carried out by the gallant white knights of the Ku Klux Klan.

Elements of this lengthy episode had been in common use for years when Mitchell came to write it. She had constructed it as an alternative version, deliberately eventful, after one in which Frank Kennedy died of illness seemed to her too dull. Scarlett's husband had to be got rid of somehow, and Mitchell submitted the alternative deaths with her manuscript. An outside reader hired by Macmillan to appraise the work—Charles Everett, a Columbia English professor, who was, over all, highly enthusiastic—advised that the author forgo the Klan episode, "because," he diplomatically suggested, "the KKK material has been worked pretty hard by others." Mitchell disclaimed any special political regard for this set of events; her preference was owed only to its greater liveliness. "As 'Alice' would have said," she explained, in what might well pass for her literary credo, there would otherwise have been "no conversation and absolutely no pictures" in that part of the book.

This particular line of conversation and these particular pictures—the fragile white woman clawed at by the black savage and avenged by the knights in white sheets—had been in circulation ever since the Klan itself was organized and began to grow, just after the war. The opposition the South had asserted between the position of its slaves and that of its women as the balancing forces of Confederate theology—Devil and Virgin, sin and forgiveness, the damned and the exalted—turned the spectre of rape into a compelling blasphemy; in a society long quietly familiar with illicit sex based on ownership, the possibility of revenge was so tensely awaited as to become a fixation. Scarlett O'Hara's unlucky carriage ride is carefully dated to a windy March day during "military" Reconstruction, soon after "the legislature refused to ratify the amendment"—the Fourteenth—and during a period when, the author informs us, "it was the large number of outrages on women and the ever-present fear for the safety of their wives and daughters that drove Southern men to cold and trembling fury and caused the Ku Klux Klan to spring up overnight."

In reality, the cry of rape as a political weapon was only beginning to be heard in the years after the war. It took its place on a long list of crimes to be avenged by the vigilantes of the Klan, or by the Knights of the White Camellia or any of the other more fleetingly established fraternities of terror—crimes like voting (either for the wrong party or at all), renting the wrong land, working at the wrong job, and, in general, being seen to behave in a manner suggesting the serious nature of Emancipation (a manner known in common parlance, and in Mitchell's, as being "uppity," as in Aunt Pitty's "the Yankees are very upset because so many uppity darkies have been killed recently"). It was with the calamitous agrarian depression of the eighteen-nineties, when the Northern pressure for Negro rights had abated and the South had begun to hope for disenfranchisement and to gather evidence for its necessity, that rape suddenly became an obsession everywhere, the overwhelming threat of the historical moment projected with equal conviction into the future and onto the past. By the time Margaret Mitchell was old enough to read, the history through which her heroine would ride had been largely rewritten.

"I was practically raised on your books, and love them very much," Mitchell wrote in answer to a fan letter from the novelist Thomas Dixon in 1936. This gracious and rather effusive tone was to be found in almost all of Mitchell's replies to congratulations from other writers, but in the case of Dixon, the neo-Confederate successor to Thomas Nelson Page, she was telling an important truth. Dixon, a North Carolina lawyer turned Baptist minister and itinerant lecturer, had been struck with furious indignation on seeing a stage production of "Uncle

Cocktail

Two hundred years ago, a young French apothecary opened a pharmacy at 437 Royal and dispensed a tonic compounded of brandy and a secret family recipe of herbs, known as bitters. Antoine Amadee Peychoud poured his cure-all into the large end of an egg cup, known in French as coquetier. The Americans couldn't pronounce coquetier, so they called it a "cocktail."

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Tom's Cabin" in 1901, and within a year he had published a refutation of Stowe's charges against his homeland. "The Leopard's Spots," subtitled "A Romance of the White Man's Burden—1865-1900" and dedicated to his wife, "Harriet, Sweet-Voiced Daughter of the Old-Fashioned South," reëmployed several "Uncle Tom" characters in a story that involved a hideous rape ("Scarcely a day passed in the South without the record of such an atrocity," the author informs us) and a consequent lynching—the rape unseen but the lynching, actually more a burning at the stake, described in vivid detail. The book reached its climax in the hero's all-persuasive speech to the North Carolina Democratic Convention: "*Resolved*, that the hour has now come in our history to eliminate the Negro from our life and reëstablish for all time the government of our fathers."

"The Clansman," Dixon's next novel, appeared in 1905. The second volume in what the author called his Race Conflict trilogy, it was published as a tribute to the heroic Ku Klux fraternity of the South's mythic past—a fraternity that had been disbanded decades before. Here Dixon remixed his brew of honey and poison into a story of how "civilization" was saved from Reconstruction's attempt "to Africanize ten great States of the American Union" only through the heroic efforts of "the reincarnated souls of the Clansmen of Old Scotland." Emboldened by his earlier success, Dixon now brought the obligatory rape—of the secondary (and expendable) heroine—out of the bushes and onto the page, where "the black claws of the beast sank into the soft white throat and she was still." The girl, in shame, chooses to leap off a cliff, hand in hand with her mother. The Clansmen's revenge is swift.

In a touring stage version of "The Clansman" that followed immediately upon the novel's success—Dixon had learned to fight "Uncle Tom" with its own weapons—real horses bearing the girl's avengers charged across the stage as counterparts of Stowe's snapping bloodhounds (which in fact were not Stowe's but an invention of the theatre). In Atlanta, Dixon himself came onstage at the end of the show to lecture a responsive audience on his work's historical merit. That same year, in Georgia, separate public parks for whites and blacks were designated, in what was still a novel gesture for a state legislature.

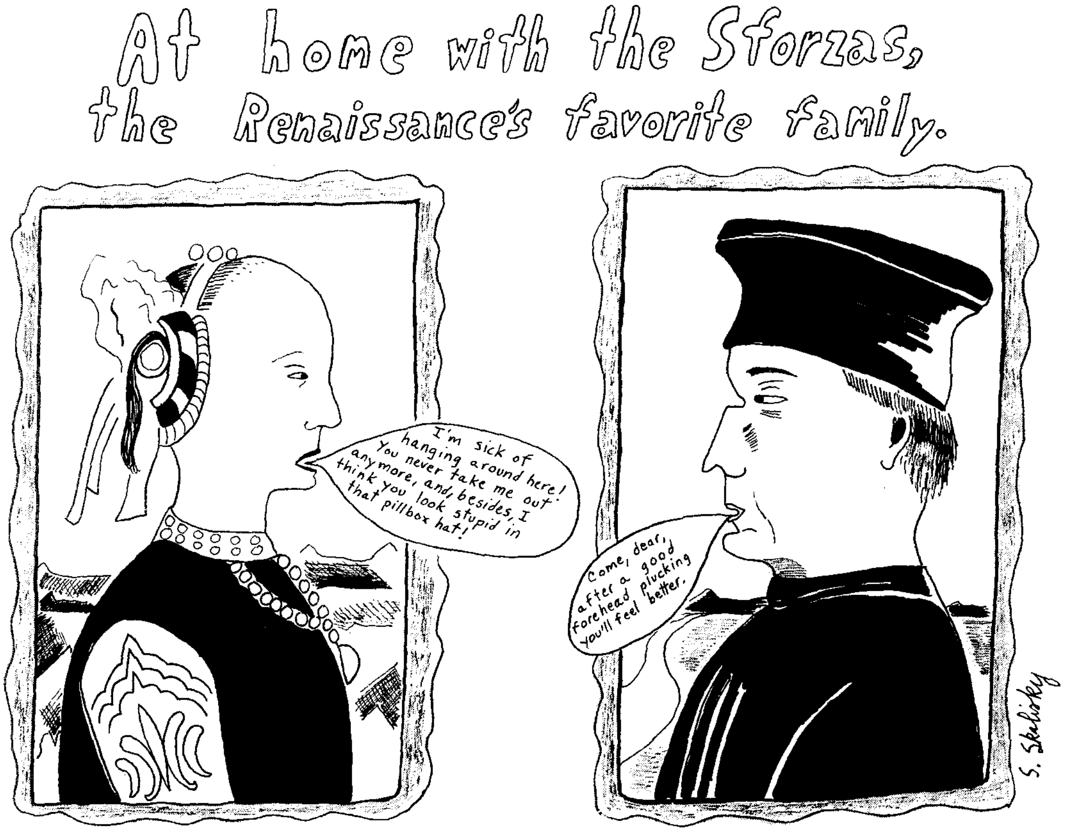
The next summer, again in Georgia, a fierce gubernatorial primary campaign fought on a platform of black disenfranchisement was followed by an outbreak in Atlanta newspapers of an "epidemic of rape," a series of stories played out in rabid headlines and special editions (the winning candidate was also editor of the *Journal*). These newspaper reports led to a five-day wave of white riots, during which mobs of avengers estimated to number ten thousand "killed or tried to kill every negro they saw."

"It will not do to express opinions too freely about the action of the mob in falling on inoffending negroes, for every man you meet justifies it and is enraged": these words, and those just above, are from a letter written by Margaret Mitchell's father—one of a series of letters in which Eugene Mitchell informed his wife, then visiting in New York, about the events of that terrible week. (They are quoted in an article published only four years ago by Joel Williamson.) Mitchell weathered the major upheavals by remaining locked in his house with his children—Margaret was nearly six years old—all of them terrified by "a thousand rumors" that "negro mobs had been poised to burn the town, cut the water pipes," and fretting because they had no gun. He reported how "Margaret suggested that Mr Daleys sword," apparently a family relic, "would be a good thing." At the start of the violence, Mitchell had tallied Atlanta's immediate losses, recording that "sixteen negroes had been killed and a multitude had been injured," and at its end he surveyed some of the broader social effects: "Negroes are taking off their hats who never knew they had hats before."

Among the many stagings of the final book in Thomas Dixon's trilogy—"The Traitor," subtitled "A Story of the Fall of the Invisible Empire"—was one that took place just a few years later in the Mitchell sitting room, with eleven-year-old Margaret as producer and director. Her report of the event to Dixon some twenty-five years afterward details with chilling adorableness how "the clansmen were recruited from the small-fry of the neighborhood, their ages ranging from five to eight," how they wore their fathers' shirts with the "tails bobbed off," and how she herself had to take a male role, because none of the little boys would play a part "where they had to 'kiss any little ol' girl.' "

The children's games of Southern history became big games, and far more chilling ones, for grownups when, in 1915, Dixon's "The Clansman" was adapted and transformed by D. W. Griffith into the first masterpiece of American film. In "The Birth of a Nation," Griffith made something mystic and drivingly apocalyptic out of Dixon's kitchen-garden racism. The film had a traumatizing impact everywhere in the country, but nowhere, perhaps, so much as in Atlanta. There, in yet another example of the interplay of history and fiction which has formed the South, the anticipation of the film's arrival inspired a band of Klan legend-keepers to climb nearby Stone Mountain and, in an elaborate ceremony, set fire to a large cross they placed on its summit. The burning cross was not, in fact, among the trappings of the original Klan but a poetic addition of Dixon's ("Issue your orders and despatch your courier to-night with the old Scottish rite of the Fiery Cross. It will send a thrill of inspiration to every clansman in the hills"), and was derived from Walter Scott's "The Lady of the Lake." In 1915, this fictitious symbol was used to mark the founding of a new Klan, based in Atlanta, which would live longer and cut deeper into the flesh of the nation than its predecessor had ever done. In the local papers, ads for the new organization and the new movie ran side by side.

"The Birth of a Nation" was surely Margaret Mitchell's model in epic form (a bulletin from one of her informants in Hollywood boasted that Selznick's street scenes were so fine as to approach even Griffith's), and her incendiary vision of Reconstruction demonstrates the film's direct visual imprint, as in her confident description of "these negroes" elected to the state legislature, "where they spent most of their time eating goobers and easing their unaccustomed feet into and out of new shoes." In the public mind such descriptions persisted, unquestioned as history, well after the work of scholars like John Hope Franklin and C. Vann Woodward, in the forties and fifties, revealed them as the distortion and propaganda of the Jim Crow years.


At home with the Sforzas, the Renaissance's favorite family.
I'm sick of hanging around here! You never take me out anymore, and, besides, I think you look stupid in that pillbox hat!
Come, dear, after a good forehead plucking you'll feel better.

Knowledge and common knowledge are two different things, and no historian ever had anything like the audiences of Dixon or Griffith or Mitchell. Always proud of the range of study that went into her work, Mitchell was the kind of writer who was able to provide three historical references from her notes for the use of a toothbrush in 1868. But she also attested: "As I had not written anything about the Klan which is not common knowledge to every Southerner, I had done no research upon it."

Some claim has been made for Mitchell as socially progressive, in her context, because her racial portraits and politics are generally devoid of the blood lust and the terror that animate Dixon and Griffith. (Indeed, it isn't certain that the aborted crime at Shantytown was to be a rape, rather than a robbery.) Hers is the mildness of complacency, of a work written in and for a time when the dirtiest job had been done—when the Southern situation had been so nearly returned to its antebellum state that the Klan, with a national membership of more than four million by the early twenties, had to turn its attention to the dangers presented by Catholics and Jews. But it was still necessary that the former slaves, if they were no longer to be portrayed as dangerous brutes, be seen as childish clowns in need of protection: how else maintain the glory of the Old Ways? The heroic Big Sam, who rescues Scarlett from the clutches of Shantytown, is made ridiculous through Mitchell's physical descriptions, all rolling eyes and flashing teeth and "watermelon-pink tongue." This is the bargain Mitchell had to strike in order to give up the virulence of Dixon (whose Sam would have been the rapist) and yet keep her racial and historical righteousness intact.

Charles Everett, Macmillan's outside reader, had added to his useless protest against the Klan episode the suggestion that "the author should keep out her own feelings in one or two places where she talks about negro rule" and the delicate observation that "to refer to Mammy's 'ape face' and her 'black paws' seems unnecessary." Mitchell, ever the lady, thanked her publisher for calling her attention to these matters—"I have tried to keep out venom, bias, bitterness as much as possible"—and, having "meant no disrespect," vowed to make the necessary changes. Clearest among these is the simian substitution in the description of Mammy that follows Ellen O'Hara's death, her "kind black face sad with the uncomprehending sadness of a monkey's face."

Bias and bitterness, though, characterize Mitchell's entire account of Reconstruction. To question this attitude is not to deny the privation, the ruin, the real suffering of Southern gentry—Edmund Wilson compared the crushing of the South during and after the war to the crushing of Hungary in 1956—but, rather, to underline Mitchell's inability to see that time and place from any but one point of view, or to admit the complexity of the situation or of the truth. W. E. B. Du Bois, writing in 1935, set forth the matter simply: "One fact and one alone explains the attitude of most recent writers toward Reconstruction; they cannot conceive of Negroes as men."

Big Sam, when he encounters Scarlett, is wearing a Union jacket and has just returned from the North, where "dem Yankee folks, fust time dey meet me, dey call me 'Mist' O'Hara,' " and where he resented and vehemently rebuffed all the questions " 'bout de blood houn's dat chase me an' de beatin's Ah got." All he wants, he says, is to go back to Tara the way it was: "Ah done had nuff freedom." There is a literary tradition for Sam's homesickness—even a black one, as in Paul Lawrence Dunbar's "You kin jes' tell Mistah Lincum fo' to tek his freedom back"—but it does not seem to be supported by the reality. Among the thousands of aged former slaves who were interviewed in the W.P.A. Federal Writers' Project of the thirties and early forties, when the South was the nation's foremost economic problem and their living conditions were generally abysmal, the question of Emancipation was answered as in a single voice. In the plain statement of a man who went by the name of Moses Mitchell, "Here's the idea: freedom is worth it all."

MARGARET MITCHELL's all-American best-seller is not, in fact, fundamentally concerned with politics, or, for all its exertions, with race, except insofar as these issues set its scenes and affect its characters. It seems unimaginable that the pleasure so many readers have found in the book bears any profound relation to these public subjects. What "Gone with the Wind" is ultimately about is romance and sex—these subjects, rather than a female point of view, are what made it a "woman's book"—and there is no surer demonstration of the fact than the false alarm of the scene outside Shantytown. Rape is not a matter of politics in Mitchell's reconstructed South. When it occurs, in one of the most carefully prepared and climactic scenes of the book, the rapist is not black but white, and not a monster but a handsome hero, and the heroine is neither murdered nor avenged but awakened to pleasure and a taste of victory.

Rhett Butler is a pure projection of idealized male sexuality, an ever-potent cliché. Although the author at no time presumes to enter his head—leaving him free of doubt, error, foolishness—his physical properties are subject to endless description and evaluation. He first appears at the big eve-of-war barbecue, tall, older, and "powerfully built": "Scarlett thought she had never seen a man with such wide shoulders, so heavy with muscles, almost too heavy for gentility." There is "a look of good blood in his dark face," and both the quality of the blood and, especially, the darkness are frequently rediscovered and remarked.

"Swarthy as a pirate," his "animal-white teeth" flashing, Rhett Butler is clearly a descendant of Don Juan and of Heathcliff, but, above all, he is the son of the Sheik: Margaret Mitchell had seen Rudolf Valentino's first starring film, "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse," often enough to derive her scandalous charity-ball Apache dance from it, and in 1924 she had interviewed the Latin actor for the Atlanta *Journal.* "He seemed older—just a bit tired," Mitchell informed her Sunday-supplement readers. "His face was swarthy, so brown that his white teeth flashed in startling contrast to his skin, his eyes tired, bored but courteous." Valentino had by then become, via "The Sheik," the biggest male sex star of the movies, having deposed at a stroke all the good-Joe national heartthrobs already on the scene by means of a newly dangerous, predatory—not to say swarthy—glamour. No wonder that Rhett Butler seems a natural star, born to celluloid. The adjectives that Mitchell supplies are the basic few: Rhett is a "pagan prince," and his movements suggest a "pagan freedom and leashed power." There is about him something "almost sinister," a "suave brutality." His body is measured and appraised as closely as Scarlett's, and the descriptions incorporate its effects, as when he joins Scarlett for a carriage ride: "The muscles of his big body rippled against his well-tailored clothes, as he got in beside her, and, as always, the sense of his great physical power struck her like a blow."

By the time that Scarlett O'Hara becomes Mrs. Butler, she has already been married twice, all the while chastely adoring the golden, honorable, and married Ashley Wilkes. But the pirate (grandson of a pirate, actually) has aroused something in her, something incomprehensible to her, beginning with an insulting glance that makes her feel "that her dress was too low in the bosom" and annoys her most "because she did not feel insulted"; continuing with the first seductive move—his lips to her palm—which brings up a "treacherous warm tide of feeling"; and going on through the elaborate spirals of a woman's sexual choreography to the poster moment where, above the flames of Atlanta, "he bent her body backward and his lips traveled down her throat to where the cameo fastened her basque."

The "Road to Tara," that thematically surging episode in which Scarlett is abandoned by Rhett to lead her helpless charges on alone toward home, is emphatically counterbalanced in the book by the later scene in which she is swept into Rhett's arms and carried, in fear and protest, up a grand and looming staircase toward their bed.

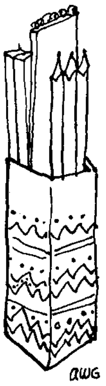
The "Road" scene marks our heroine's discovery of her strength and the making of her resolve; the "Rape" (as Selznick, for one, frankly termed it) is her glad surrender of strength to a force greater than her own—"to arms that were too strong, lips too bruising, fate that moved too fast."

Many women who are passionate fans of "Gone with the Wind"—and of both these scenes—have claimed that the word "rape" is not an adequate description of the events in the Butler bedroom. The preferred term, not only in this instance but in the thousands of such scenes that fill women's popular fiction, is something along the lines of "forceful persuasion." This is not Sade and it is not Faulkner—not painful, not punishing. Its roots are as old and noble as Richardson's "Clarissa"—the modern novel born in an excruciatingly prolonged contemplation of rape. Margaret Mitchell herself had a variety of models to choose from in the years when she was growing into her vocation; in 1920, Mencken noted that among the few types of books that almost never lost money in the United States were "novels in which the heroine is forcibly overcome by the hero"—a category that placed second only to murder stories.

But the "baby-faced li'l vamp" didn't require fiction to introduce her to the attractions of forceful persuasion, except, perhaps, as it may have nourished her natural propensities and accomplishments. The giddy "It-girl" letters that Mitchell sent North after leaving college, collected by Jane Bonner Peacock under the title "A Dynamo Going to Waste," retail what she called her " 'cutie' career" and brim with the thrills of sexual brinksmanship: "Promised to marry a youthful cave man—just to see what would happen (I found out quite speedily and had a helluva time getting him off the scene for keeps)"; and "I used to have an elegant time in my early youth . . . by giving a life like imitation of a modern young woman whose blistering passions were only held in check by an iron control. . . . Thoughts of seduction were tabled and rape became more to the point." She even encounters or creates the occasional Rhett: "Ever know a man who makes you acutely conscious that your dress is too low? That's A.B. I suddenly began to loathe him. I took sidelong glances at him, noting his sensual mouth and closely cropped moustache and meeting his assured, faintly sneering eyes." The specimen escorts her home and won't leave, "and then," she wails, "the fun began! . . . When you've liked and trusted a man, it is no pleasant sight to see him lose his head and go wild. It was the evening dress, I guess, and the fact that both straps slipped down at this inopportune time."

It wasn't the mysterious A.B. whom Mitchell married soon after this but another in the same line. Anne Edwards, in her biography of the author, "Road to Tara," identifies Mitchell's first husband, Red Upshaw, with Rhett Butler, pointing out that even the unexplained middle initial "K" that Scarlett espies on Rhett's handkerchief belongs properly to Berrien Kinnard Upshaw, and could be seen as a kind of personal signal. At the time she was writing her book, Mitchell still slept with a pistol by her bed in case the signal ever again took living shape in her vicinity. Their last meeting is memorialized in nonfictional form in Mitchell's sworn deposition, cited by Edwards, that served as evidence in the Upshaws' divorce proceedings. Married in September, 1922, the bride and groom separated within months, and the next July he suddenly reappeared at her home. "Mr. Upshaw demanded his connubial rights," Mitchell testified, "after striking me with his fist upon my left arm about the elbow." Her counsel added that he had "jerked her against a bed, causing her to be bruised all over her body." The maid had come running, and as Upshaw left he had delivered a final punch to the eye; Mitchell was hospitalized for two weeks.

Nothing of the kind happens to Scarlett O'Hara, of course. Fiction is different. And romantic fiction is not only not reality but very nearly its antidote. In Mitchell's latter-day fairy tale, the darkly beautiful pagan prince, drunk and angry, is desperately in love with the delicately beautiful woman who has wronged him cruelly through years of marriage and now stands trembling before him; his cravat and shirt are open, her wrapper is pulled tightly closed. She runs from him, but loses a slipper in her flight, and he is suddenly beside her: "He swung her off her feet into his arms and started up the stairs. Her head was crushed against his chest and she heard the hard hammering of his heart. . . . Up the stairs, he went in the utter darkness, up, up, and she was wild with fear." It is a long way up, and a long paragraph. Arriving at last at the landing, he "bent over her and kissed her with a savagery and a completeness that wiped out everything from her mind but the dark into which she was sinking and the lips on hers." The writing is Mitchell at her fanciest: "She was darkness and he was darkness and there had never been anything before this time." And then—they are still on the stairs—"she had a wild thrill such as she had never known. . . . For the first time in her life she had met someone, something stronger than she, someone she could neither bully nor break, someone who was bullying and breaking her."



This neo-Victorian ravishment concludes in accord with the more historically appropriate wisdom of Anita Loos: "In those days," the sibyl of the twenties proclaimed, "a girl could wake up smiling." Scarlett O'Hara wakes up—it's the next thing we know—blushing, and filled with "the ecstasy of surrender." (In the movie, she warbles a little morning-after song; Mitchell's friend Susan Myrick, responsible for period authenticity, had first suggested "It ain't what you do, it's the way that you do it.") She worries about whether she can ever again even imagine herself to be a lady, but most of all she feels newly secure in love. What the "wild, mad night" has meant to her, finally, and what the old-fashioned "forceful persuasion" scene seems to mean generally to heroines and to readers, is proof resplendent of her own desirability. This is her satisfaction, and this is, ironically, her power ("Now she knew the weakness of his armor")—the only power she has ever thought to have.

When "The Clansman" was reprinted in the early nineteen-forties, on the coattails of "Gone with the Wind," the book's new front cover identified it as a "world-famous love story"; the back cover advertised a line of "Love Stories" in cheap editions, with titles that ranged from "Pride and Prejudice" and "Wuthering Heights" to "Grand Hotel," "Prodigal Nurse," and "Impatient Virgin." Quite a slope. By the nineteen-fifties, the genre of

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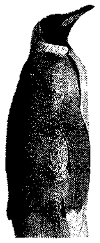

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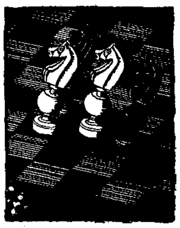
romance fiction—settled into a kind of pinkies-up semi-pornography—was outselling even mysteries, and by the nineteen-seventies it had become an assembly-line product far outselling all other categories of paperbacks, whether because of a reaction against feminism or the ingenuities of marketing or expanding leisure and cultural vacuity it is hard to say.

From national best-sellers to unnamable checkout-counter Harlequins, the "romantic" pattern was largely fixed. An academic study of the proliferating species—a study in the "ethnographies of reading"—by a Duke professor, Janice A. Radway, provides a precisely charted analysis of thirteen standard narrative events, or "functions," that make up the fully evolved contemporary romance novel. Using Kathleen Woodiwiss's particularly popular "The Flame and the Flower" as her main demonstration model—hero Brandon, heroine Heather—Radway outlines the rules of the game: function 1, the heroine's social identity is destroyed; function 2, the heroine reacts antagonistically to an aristocratic male; and so on. In this way, Radway arrives at the ideal romance's midpoint: "Although he continues to believe Heather is an opportunist and she herself remains angry with him over the rape (function 7), their emotional separation does not stop him from surprising her with especially thoughtful gifts (function 8)." No wonder Scarlett assumed she had something to smile about.

But the big upset in Margaret Mitchell's story is her break with the very formula that she both exploited and exemplified: Scarlett O'Hara's brush with sensual bliss is not the start of a long road disappearing into marital contentment. Probably the most rigorous aspect of "Gone with the Wind" is Mitchell's unyielding detachment from her heroine. The author never falls for her creature's charms, and she neither relents toward her faults nor forgives them. Scarlett's halting moral and emotional development occurs in barely measurable increments: on page 947, she experiences "one of the few adult emotions" she has ever had, and it is not until page 1,031, almost the last in the book, that her husband's unwonted show of grief over the death of their child elevates her to the point where for "the first time in her life she had ever been sorry for anyone without feeling contemptuous as well, because it was the first time she had ever approached understanding any other human being." It is, of course, too late.



Rhett Butler's departure and his line "My dear, I don't give a damn" have vexed many a sentimental heart. (The rhythmic upbeat of "Frankly" was added to the movie, and Selznick, famously, had to fight for the right to "damn.") Mitchell freely told everyone that she had written the ending first; she knew exactly what she was after. Considering the contrast between the author's reckless first marriage and the resigned respectability of her second, and looking at the photographs in which she hardens and dries so conspicuously through her twenties and her thirties—as though Clara Bow were turning into Norma Shearer—one might imagine the revenge of a premature dowager on her own all too audacious youth. Yet even in the middle of that youth Mitchell seems to have had such an idea, such an ending, in mind. In letters written just after her time at Smith, she complains of her inability to complete a story she is working on, which is to conclude with a kiss at a wedding—a kiss by which a man deliberately lets a woman know that by marrying someone else she has just ruined her life. The fledgling author was having no end of trouble describing that all-meaning kiss, but she did know that "when the insistent demand of his lips on hers makes her admit that she always would be his, then he'd leave." (To which she appended, "I do see vast possibilities for 'hot stuff' in that passage!")

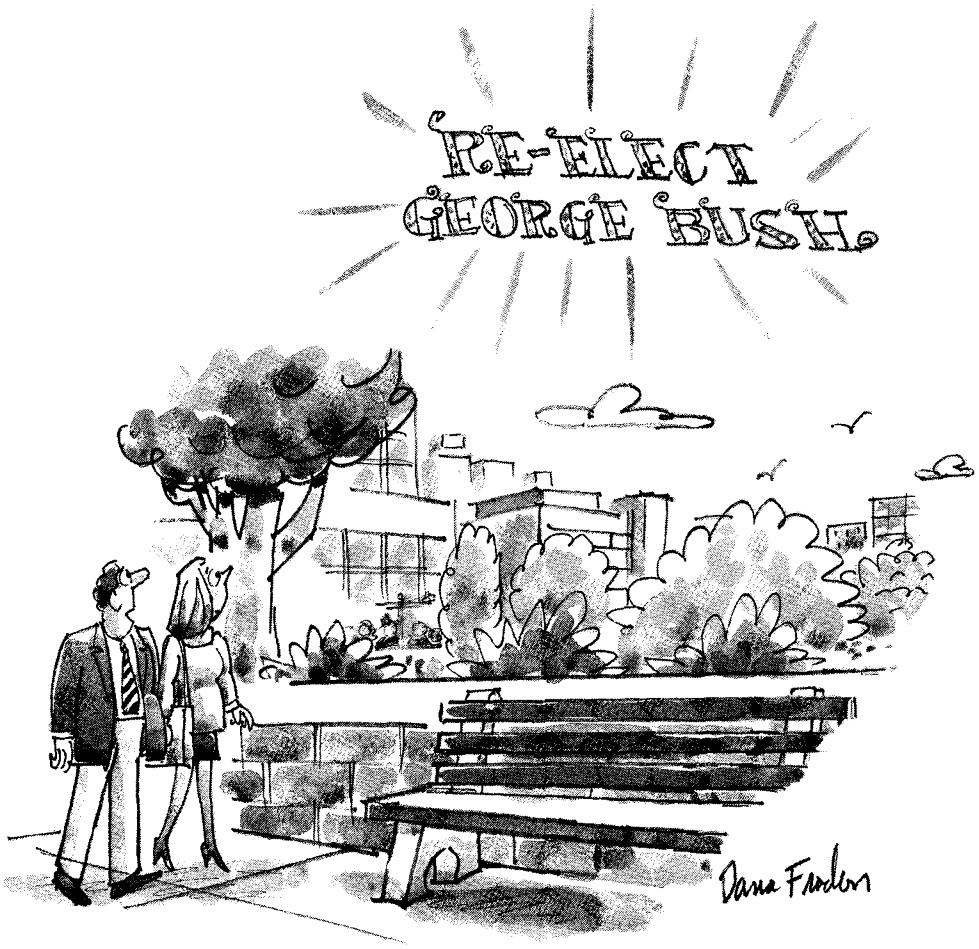
When Macmillan's reader suggested that Mitchell reduce the sense of finality in Rhett's departure, she replied, "I'll change it any way you want, except to make a happy ending." Her intention, she firmly stated, was "to leave the ending open to the reader." And so it has come to pass that Americans for more than half a century have divided into those who fully expect Rhett Butler to return to Scarlett O'Hara and those who know that he never will.

ON the seventy-third anniversary of the Battle of Atlanta, in July of 1937, a Confederate flag was flown over the old city center at Five Points for the first time in general memory; it was the beginning of a new—or renewed—tradition. In a letter written that November, Mitchell reported to her publisher that "the book is on the required collateral reading lists of many high schools in the South, and even a number of junior high schools and grammar schools are using it." She noted that "the sex angle" seemed to pass easily over the youngest heads, or had proved amenable to such interpretation as that of one "bright child"—aged eleven—whose school book report referred to Belle Watling's brothel, in the scene where the heroic Klan members are sheltered there, as "the swankiest night club in Atlanta." This happy example, she wrote, had given her a sense of relief: "After that I had no fears that I was polluting the youthful mind."

What kind of moral responsibility does she bear, after all? The United States is a young country, and there have been many to accuse her of polluting the *national* mind—or, at least, of stirring up and adding cheap perfume to what has always lurked at the bottom of it. Accusations from the Northern and leftist press that her book amounted to "negro baiting" drew her most indignant, fluttering responses: "Personally I do not know where they get such an idea. . . . The negroes in this section have read it in large herds and while I have not heard as many comments as I would like to hear, my friends are continually telling me what colored elevator operators, garage attendants, etc., tell them and these colored people seem well pleased."

What seems clear is that Margaret Mitchell represented her time and place as accurately as she had intended Scarlett O'Hara to do: she was outraged innocence, she was a society more staunchly and unquestioningly segregated than any since slavery, she was her own Atlanta. In 1926, the year she began writing "Gone with the Wind," a new city ordinance prohibited Negro barbers from serving white women or children; in 1940, the year after the movie's release, another ordinance divided the city's taxis according to the permitted race of passengers. And in the years between she wrote a love story that made such restrictions seem as natural and as warmly familial as weddings and jealousy.

It has been said that, while the



"I detect the fine hand of James Baker behind that."

• •

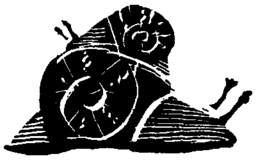
North won the war, Margaret Mitchell won the peace, and certainly Appomattox was no match for the big guns of Hollywood. The movie was carefully designed to soften many of the book's direct racial blows, except in the case of the dizzyingly imbecilic Prissy. ("I did everything they asked me to," Butterfly McQueen said, "except I wouldn't let them slap me and I wouldn't eat the watermelon. . . . I hated the part then.") David Selznick expanded Mammy's role (McQueen was counterbalanced by the august Hattie MacDaniel), and insisted that, in sum, "the Negroes come out decidedly on the right side of the ledger." But the seductiveness of the film swept all before it: by force of color and music, by the dynamics of movement and incident, and by the beauty of movie stars, "Gone with the Wind"—Selznick and Vivien Leigh's "Gone with the Wind"—became a glorification of the Old South such as had never been seen before.

On the eve of the Atlanta première, in December, 1939, a celebratory Junior League costume ball, for six thousand, managed to recapture, in the words of a local paper, "the days at Tara Hall, when every man was a master and every man had a slave." The entertainment that night alternated between the "hot music" of Kay Kyser's swing band and the spirituals of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr.,'s Ebenezer Baptist Church choir, which performed in slave attire before a plantation backdrop, and included among the onstage "pickaninnies" the minister's ten-year-old son, Martin, Jr. Mitchell did not attend the ball, but she was present, in full glory, at the next night's opening. And, give or take a few architectural details, the world of the movie was just as she had envisioned it: an Eden that knew no serpent until the Yankees came.

Selznick had from the start ruled out any presentation of the Klan, voicing fear that its appearance "might come out as an unintentional advertisement for intolerant societies in these fascist-ridden times." Even before his cameras were rolling, the book was on its way to becoming one of Germany's biggest sellers. At the time of the American Civil War, the German government, in the person of Bismarck, had identified with the triumphant North and the struggle to remain unified, but after 1918 Germany was no longer identifying with victors. One applicant for the job of translating "Gone with the Wind" into German stated in a letter to Macmillan that "it does not contain any ideas which could displease the Hitler government" (unlike the once popular works of Upton Sinclair, John Dos Passos, and Sinclair Lewis, which had been thrown onto the bonfires of 1933). "Vom Winde Verweht" had sold over three hundred and sixty thousand copies by 1941, at which time its message was revealed to the Nazi government as so mercurial, its value as propaganda so unreliable, that it was suddenly banned. The Germans, after allowing the book to appear in occupied countries, had discovered that they were not the only ones to identify with the rebels in gray who would not accept defeat. Mitchell received reports that her book was serving as "a great morale builder" in those countries, and that, as she wrote to her publisher, "occupied nations identified themselves with the South during Reconstruction, identified the Ku Klux Klan with the forces of the Resistance, and were heartened by the thought that the South eventually got back its own state governments." In 1944, the New York *Journal-American* reported that bootlegged copies of the book were selling for sixty dollars in France and for nearly as much in Holland, Norway, and Belgium. According to the report, orders to seize all such copies had gone out, and people caught with the book in their possession were being shot.

A MORE current (and more credible) proof of the force of Mitchell's creation has been its ability to keep the recent sequel, Alexandra Ripley's "Scarlett," on the best-seller list for the better part of a year; indeed, this fact betokens a near-savage interest in finding out, after fifty-five years, what happened. Sequels or plans for sequels have abounded since 1936, and Mitchell was forever squelching "last chapter" contests, as well as whole manuscripts with titles like "Return of the Gentle Wind" or "Whispering Winds." She stated flatly and often that she would never attempt a sequel herself, and her husband stood constant legal guard over the issue. "Not only would such a sequel be an 'unfair appropriation' of her skill," he wrote to Macmillan in 1938, "but it would also damage her through being an 'inferior imitation' (if we may judge by the sequels already written)."

Perhaps they should have just let it happen. What has been made of the job now seems almost inevitable, given the course of the woman's romance novel—Scarlett not as belle or vamp but as Cosmo girl, and suffering from painfully hardened prose implants. "I mustn't ever tell him again that I love him," she reproves herself. "That makes him feel pressured." This Scarlett hurries along thick carpets to embroidered bellpulls; she orders ice swans for her parties, and cases of champagne ("Scarlett did so like for things to be stylish"); she is a courageous shopper. But, writing aside, and critics aside, it is hard to believe that this "inferior imitation" has been satisfying to many readers, if only because no real connection is ever made with Mitchell's characters. Call them Rhett and Scarlett, call them Hamlet and Ophelia, these newcomers are not for a moment any other pair but Brandon and Heather. Of Mitchell's world the only recognizable sign is in the infamous injunction of her estate (a consortium of nephews and lawyers) against the presentation of explicit sex scenes, homosexuality, or miscegenation. F. Scott Fitzgerald said of "Gone with the Wind," "I felt no contempt for it but only a certain pity for those who considered it the supreme achievement of the human mind." In present company it may seem to its worshippers more supreme than ever.



A strenuous effort to throw off the stigma of decades of literary patronizing has been made in a recent biography of Margaret Mitchell, Darden Asbury Pyron's "Southern Daughter" (Oxford; $26). As a historian, a Southerner by breeding and conviction, and a true "Gone with the Wind" believer, Pyron is well qualified for the task, but his attributes don't always cohere, and, at its extremes, his book veers between a bright-eyed folksiness—"Success slammed through the Mitchell-Marsh apartment on Seventeenth Street like Huns and Tartars," he tells us—and a starkly conventional but tendentious academic voice, of which no sample is needed. He has emerged with a thorough and exacting but almost willfully earnest study that falters through the lack of any major new material to present—Mitchell's heirs destroyed everything within their reach—and a consequent falling back, for substance and novelty, on overstated theories about the psychological subtext of the novel.

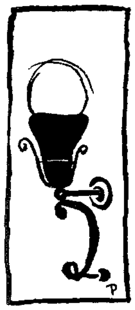
Pyron has attempted what seems a counter-biography to the popular Anne Edwards account—popular both in its sales and in its tradition. Edwards, the author of yet another unpublished sequel (hers was part of a film project that failed) and also of biographies of Vivien Leigh and Judy Garland, wrote a clear and straightforward (dare one say "readable"?) story. Though it was generally well researched, and was the source of a number of the narrative incidents reported in the foregoing, Edwards' work suffered from errors based on misreadings of the newly available Macmillan Archive (she mistakenly suggests that Mitchell envisioned a happy ending) and an occasional stumble from a usually sensible tone into the likes of "Fury rose inside Peggy Mitchell's small-breasted chest." Still, her book seemed, over all, well suited to its subject.

Pyron's far weightier work suggests—almost seems to require—a darker figure at its center. He makes a great deal of a succession of illnesses and accidents that plagued Mitchell's life (her letters offer a barrage of boils and broken bones, of collisions with cars and with her furniture), and he takes her somewhat loose claim that she began writing her novel only because "I couldn't walk for a couple of years" as proof that, in his words, "she never failed to associate her fiction with disease and suffering." Mitchell's experience of physical pain was, according to Pyron, a determining element of what she finally wrote, and the writing itself thus becomes a story fulfilled only in "a chronicle of horrors—death, abandonment, rejection, alienation, smashed hopes, and fatal misunderstanding." Convinced that his heroine has been done wrong by a Northern literary establishment that despised her politics and dismissed her art, Pyron is nothing if not zealous in supplying the required interpretative shadows—the "existential pessimism"—to prove to these critics that there was something to dismiss.

More persuasive shadows are brushed in with Pyron's portrait of Mitchell as an avid collector of pornography, a matter that was no great secret at the time among her friends; in a letter to her sister-in-law she refers easily to "a dog eared copy of 'Elsie Dinsmore' which, for appearances, I keep shelved between copies of 'Jurgen' and 'How Kate Lost Her Maiden Head' (a most informative volume)." Mitchell particularly doted on the case studies of Havelock Ellis, which she ordered from the "dirty book stores" in New York. A friend with whom she shared her treasures—at one time, she belonged to a kind of Atlanta hobby club—reported that her favorite Ellis history involved a case of male lust so extreme as to enforce disregard for its object's sex or species. As Pyron puts it, rather succinctly, "she dreamed of satyrs."

The point of Pyron's discussion is not to soil Mitchell's reputation but, on the contrary, to add dimension to it—to reveal her as a complex twentieth-century figure. (Perhaps he had in mind R. W. B. Lewis's revelations about Edith Wharton.) But Pyron stops at any exploration, or even acknowledgment, of the series of masks that Mitchell seems to have worn, of the elaborate playacting that characterizes her life—perhaps because this path would lead back, inevitably, to the treacherous issue of race. He bridles at the suggestion that an early story of hers turned upon miscegenation. (Apparently an attempt at Faulknerism, the story was destroyed after her death; the heroine, it might be noted, was named 'Ropa—short for Europa, of mythical godly ravishment.) It was Pyron who uncovered the episode of Mitchell's quitting the history course at Smith, but he minimizes its import with an observation on "her discomfort about living in the North."

In the end, though, and most curiously, Pyron crushes all the various modest possibilities of interpretation of Mitchell's book under a single monumental theory. After revealing the depths of the author's sexual preoccupations, the biographer proposes a primary interpretation of "Gone with the Wind" as a search for The Mother—as a disquisition on the difficult relationship of mother and daughter. In this view, Rhett not only is not Mitchell's first husband (Pyron briskly dismisses Edwards' identification) but isn't even a man; rather, he is a stand-in for Maybelle Mitchell. And so, for good measure, is Tara: "the mythic mother. . . . Maybelle Mitchell." Indeed, Pyron's "Gone with the Wind" is a romance not between a hero and a heroine but between a woman and her mother, and the meaning of the novel is to be found, he reports, in Mitchell's sense of "the central, defining characteristic of women's lives—the birth experience." Aside from the reductionism of this notion, which seems almost purposefully at odds with the lessons that Maybelle Mitchell tried to teach her daughter, one can only wonder how it is to be reconciled with the life of the childless author herself.



If neither Edwards nor Pyron succeeds in bringing Mitchell quite to life, it must be acknowledged that they had little to work with, not only because so much material was destroyed but because of the absence in what abundantly remains of any sign that the woman developed her thoughts, that she reflected or reconsidered, or, indeed, that she had any interior life. This may be a result of deliberate secrecy and obfuscation, or perhaps there is some connection, after all, with the embrace of the accepted and the clichéd which marks her writing. Over the years, Mitchell came to seem increasingly mechanical in her responses, fierce about copyrights, and terrified of being forgotten. "I think the war, of course, had something to do with the cessation of public interest in me," she wrote in the fall of 1940, 'and the election naturally diverted attention." Her death, in 1949—she was run over by an off-duty taxi-driver—was front-page news. Just a few months earlier, she had written a collegial note to William Faulkner—her first—saying that she thought he might like to see a reproduction of the Italian jacket cover of "Sanctuary" in a catalogue she had come across: "I showed it to a friend who is a great admirer of your books—'Dear me—how *explicit* the Italians are!' " There is no record that he replied.

Margaret Mitchell is unlikely ever to join Faulkner or, for that matter, Harriet Beecher Stowe in the gleaming uniform rows of the classic Library of America editions. In the history of American literature—in all the published histories—her place, when she has one, is in a corner apart, as a vulgar aside having to do with numbers rather than words. She doesn't even make it onto the list of Best Civil War Novels in either of the studies devoted exclusively to the genre. And, except for the sociologists of best-sellers, she has been as fully excluded from current reconsiderations of women's writing. "Gone with the Wind" hasn't a place in anyone's canon; it remains a book that nobody wants except its readers.

More than half a century after its publication, Mitchell's novel is an accepted American artifact, and still a symbol of the gaping cultural fissure that it once helped to define. As the great unnamed, "Gone with the Wind" hovers over a richly revealing 1962 essay on our national myths by Malcolm Cowley, Mitchell's longtime and most perceptive adversary. Cowley lists a succession of post-1920 literary legends: T. S. Eliot's spiritual wasteland, Fitzgerald's Jazz Age, Hemingway's Lost Generation, Erskine Caldwell's Tobacco Road, Steinbeck's Okies, and the "Southern cavalier legend," which, although more than a century old, "was raised to a new dimension by William Faulkner." Needless to say, the red earth of Tara—even from this myth-raising perspective—is not within Cowley's view, although he does go on to state that "it was during this period, too, that Troy was burned again in the shape of Atlanta." But in what book? Written by whom? The eminent critic concludes, "Hundreds of authors working in collaboration had given us another Iliad, of sorts." An American epic, then—of sorts. An American embarrassment, reflecting a society, an era, a nation: our Dunciad, our Scarlettiad. Blatant, commercial, disowned. There is, after all, some spark of justice in the fate of Margaret Mitchell's blundering colossus, condemned by posterity to live on triumphantly yet always separate and never, never equal.

—Claudia Roth Pierpont

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BOOKS

BRIEFLY NOTED

FICTION

The Patron Saint of Liars, by Ann Patchett (Houghton Mifflin; $21). In 1968, most of the pregnant girls arriving at St. Elizabeth's home for unwed mothers are, of necessity, liars of one sort or another, and most of them tell Mother Corinne the same lie Rose does when she is initially questioned about the baby's father—" 'He's dead,' I said. 'It happened in a car.' " But Rose is a more committed and accomplished liar than her fellow-residents: for starters, she really *is* married, and her husband is alive. Ms. Patchett's easy, naturalistic first novel is charged with the paradoxes of kinship and estrangement, devotion and delusion. In this tiny, Catholic corner of Habit, Kentucky, a dutiful daughter hides from the mother she adores, a supremely gentle man believes himself a murderer, an indifferent mother refuses to put her baby up for adoption, and a nun predicts the future on a regular basis. Rose isn't the only one at St. Elizabeth's doing penance and hoping for a redemptive sign from God. Perhaps this novel's greatest accomplishment is that we become as yearning and uncertain as the characters themselves—we search for a divine pattern to their lives, yet are surprisingly accepting of the author's reluctance to trace it for us.

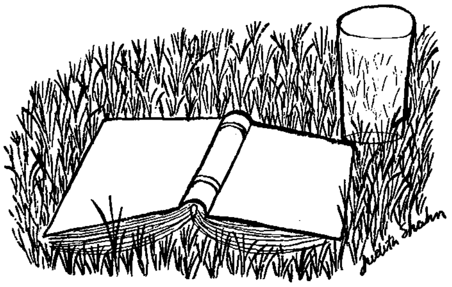
The D. Case: The Truth About the Mystery of Edwin Drood, by Charles Dickens, Carlo Fruttero, and Franco Lucentini, translated from the Italian by Gregory Dowling (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; $23.95). This goofy, absorbing capriccio takes us to Rome, where two gigantic Japanese corporations have assembled expert panels for an International Forum on the Completion of Unfinished or Fragmentary Works in Music and Literature. A world-class crew—Holmes, Poirot, and all the other detectives whose feats of ratiocination have cleared up everything for several generations of readers—has been convoked to solve "The Mystery of Edwin Drood," the novel interrupted by Dickens' death, in 1870. Sections of Dickens' tale are interspersed here with the doings of the detectives. There's action—or, anyway, motion—as the party tours Rome, visiting sites Dickens himself visited and wrote about, and there's travel back in time and through literature, as the panelists take account of earlier efforts at unriddling "Drood." The authors keep us in suspense up to the very end, when they solve not one crime but two, the second all the more shocking because it has been wholly unsuspected for more than a hundred and twenty years.

GENERAL

The End of Equality, by Mickey Kaus (Basic; $25). A lively, original, intellectually provocative argument about how to bring this nation together and avert the hardening of a class or caste system based on great disparities in income. Mr. Kaus quite properly asserts that money isn't everything: Americans generally understand that character deserves more respect than cash, and even though they tend to segregate themselves by income, they don't want to be snobs, because they know that democratic government must be rooted in a democratic, egalitarian society. He maintains, however, that programs designed to make us more democratic by redistributing income have so far proved ineffective as well as unpopular, and suggests instead policies designed to unite all classes in shared experience: national service, national health, and the substitution of work for welfare, which would gradually eliminate an underclass whose rowdy and criminal activities terrorize the rest of society and drive those who can afford it to seek safety in exclusive enclaves. The author points out that his proposed welfare-workfare labor force could improve public amenities—libraries, parks—and so create more spaces the community can share. And he has plenty of other useful comments—on the privileged nature of cable television, for instance, and the lost camaraderie of sports arenas.

Water and Light: A Diver's Journey to a Coral Reef, by Stephen Harrigan (Houghton Mifflin; $19.95). "A coral reef may be the most industrious, pulsating, *driven* environment on earth," says the author. The reef he explores here lies just off the coast of Grand Turk Island, in the Caribbean. In a comprehensive natural history of the Grand Turk reef he anatomizes the animal nature of coral, and he describes swimming into the penetralia of huge coral palaces, and the sea life he finds lurking there. He joins schools of fish and observes myriad species: French angelfish, blue gobies, creole wrasses, bar jacks, cowfish. This submerged world, now at risk from the depredations of man, excites wonder in the author—at the eye of the octopus ("When you look eye to eye at an octopus . . . you feel it staring at you, taking your measure, *thinking* about you"); at the mysterious way all the individuals in a vast school of fish get messages at the same time; at the "secret, mournful wisdom" of whale song. He tells us about the people who live on Grand Turk, or come there on business, and he is given to reflecting on the subtleties of the underwater experience, but his real virtue as a writer is his ability to convey, in precise, lucid prose, the marvels of the sea bottom.

Note: "Oh Canada! Oh Quebec! Requiem for a Divided Country," by Mordecai Richler, has been published by Knopf ($23). Some of the contents originally appeared in *The New Yorker*.



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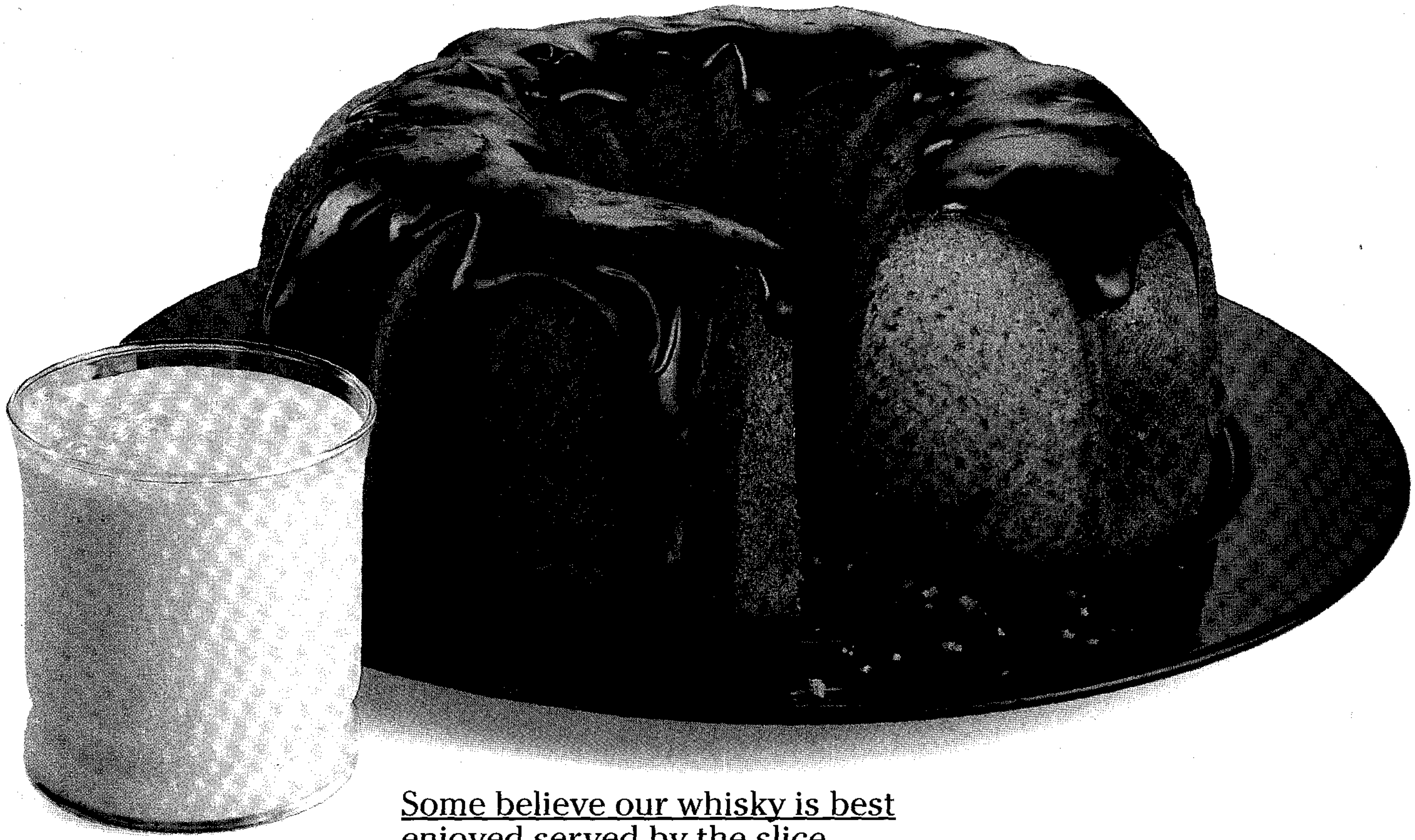

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